

Carolina Country

A Touchstone Energy Cooperative Publication

Carolina Country garden guide inside

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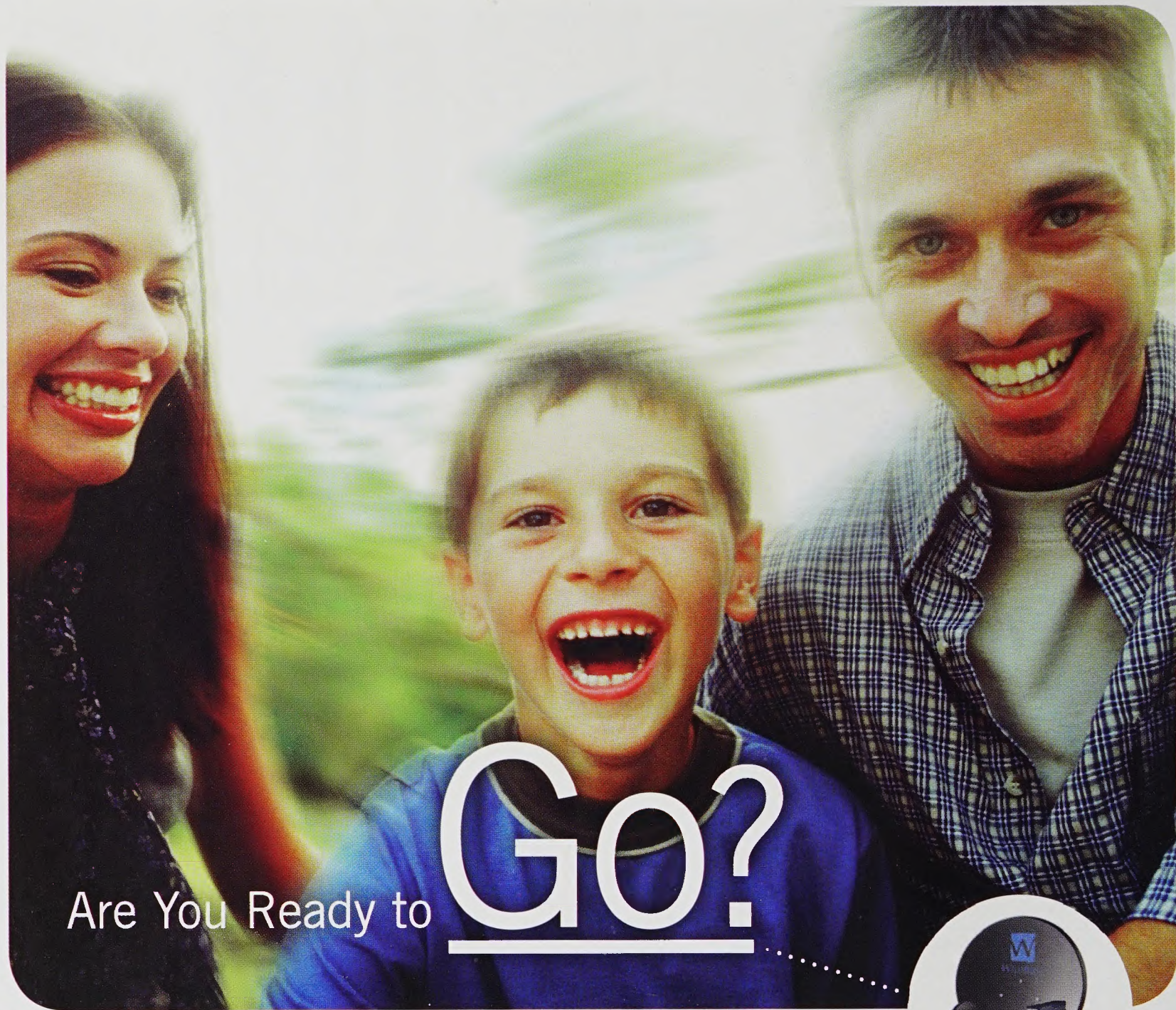
Tour 3 public gardens

Asheville, Durham and New Bern
offer unexpected treasures

Create a straw bale garden

Find useful spring tips

Container gardens, herb gardens and new garden tools—see center pages



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North Carolina's electric cooperatives provide reliable, safe and affordable electric service to 850,000 homes, farms and businesses in North Carolina. The 27 electric cooperatives are each member-owned, not-for-profit and overseen by a board of directors elected by the membership.

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CAROLINA COUNTRY GARDENS— OUR ANNUAL GARDENING GUIDE

14 THREE PUBLIC GARDENS

You can't go wrong with a visit to one of these perennial favorites. From roses to rocks, these gardens in Asheville, Durham and New Bern will capture your imagination.

19 HOW TO GROW A STRAW BALE GARDEN

No weeding, raking or hoeing? Sounds too good to be true.

20 SPRING GARDENING TIPS

A gardening "to-do" list for March, April and May.

22 TRUE CONFESSIONS OF GARDENERS

Planning, tending, picking, preserving—for some reason it's all good.

30 EDENTON

One of North Carolina's Preserve America communities.



ON THE COVER

Emma Lewis loves flowers, says her grandmother Lois Weaver, who took this picture while Emma was in her garden in West Jefferson.



departments

First Person	4
More Power to You	8
You're From Carolina Country If... ..	34
Carolina Country Store	36, 38
Marketplace	40, 42
Joyner's Corner	41

Carolina Compass	43
Carolina Gardens	46
Energy Cents	48
Classified Ads	49
Carolina Kitchen	50

The value of electricity today

by Dale F. Lambert



What does the word “value” mean to you?

In many cases, value has a monetary implication. But there are times when value takes on a more significant meaning. These include the comfort of a friend, or the individual beliefs we follow to conduct our daily lives, or when our children climb into our laps to be held close. I am privileged that one of my daughters regularly writes an “I Love You Dad” note and sticks it where she knows I will see it.

Webster defines value as “The quality of a thing that makes it wanted or desirable, worth; the worth of a thing in money or in other goods; buying power; to think of or rate, as compared with other things; to think highly of.” You get the picture. Value has several meanings.

Let’s consider the value of electricity from two perspectives, the monetary value and the worth.

First, let’s look at the price of electricity compared to inflation from November 1995 to November 2005. Using the latest Consumer Price Index (CPI) data from the U.S. Department of Labor, the CPI increased by 28.65 percent during that 10-year period.

Overall, the things we purchase have increased in price by more than 28 percent. In the same time period, the power bill of a typical Randolph EMC member household increased 1.97 percent. And this is in a time when the cost of two of our primary generation components, coal and natural gas, increased substantially. I would say that electricity is a tremendous value.

Second, let’s look at the worth. Many times, the worth of something goes up when we lose it. The first thing that comes to mind is our health. Haven’t we heard someone experiencing physical difficulties say they would give anything to return to good health? We take it for granted until it is gone. Recently I lost my car keys. The day before, it did not cross my mind just how important those keys were until they hid from me. Needless to say, those keys got real important, real quick. Luckily, I found them.

When a major storm knocks out power to thousands of members, I hear how much they missed electricity while it

was out. When these storms hit, think of the times you go into a room and, out of habit, flip on the light switch and nothing happens. It is so easy to take it for granted.

Considering the average Randolph EMC member household’s annual usage, the cost for their electricity is less than \$4 per day. What can you purchase for \$4? A single fast-food “value meal” costs more than \$4. A gallon of milk is close to \$4. One pound of coffee, five pounds of potatoes, a small

pack of batteries, a small bag of dog or cat food, some greeting cards all generally cost more than \$4 each. You pay close to \$8 to watch a movie for maybe two hours.

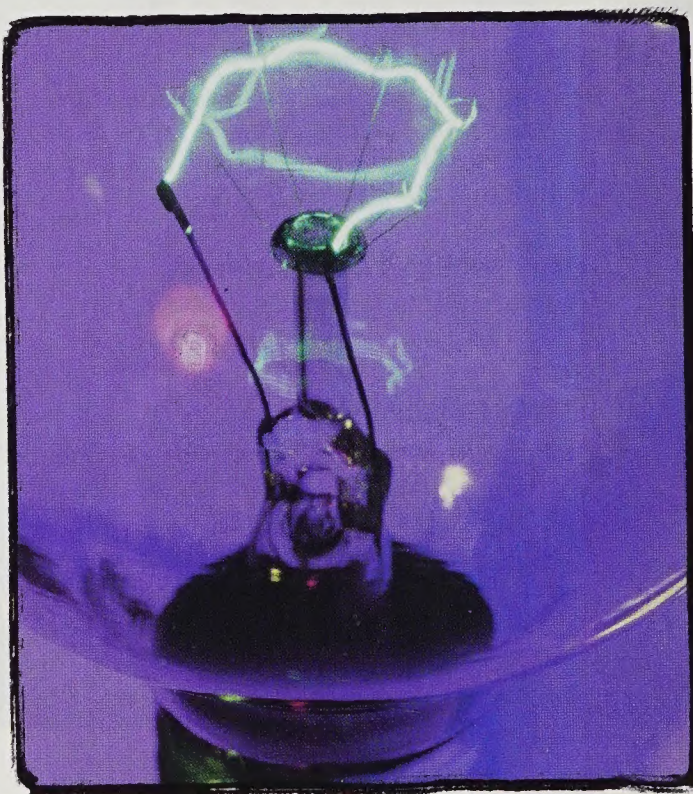
Now, what does electricity do for us each day? It heats and cools our homes, provides light inside and out, cooks meals, runs appliances, heats and pumps water, washes dishes and clothes, dries our clothes and hair, keeps things refrigerated and frozen (that \$4 gallon of milk will not last long without it), charges telephones, raises and lowers garage doors, runs power tools, powers TVs, radios and computers that connect us to the outside world. The list goes on.

Can you see the value and worth of electricity and what it does for us? Also keep in mind that we pay for those items listed above prior to using them. What if you were required to pay McDonalds at the end of the month for those “value meals” you enjoyed? We pay for electricity at the end of each month according to how much we used, usually without much thought to what it does for us each day or to the value it brings.

I hope I have shed some “light” on the value of electricity. To me, even in today’s volatile energy environment, electricity is by far the most economical and valuable energy source.

Also, I would like to note that your Touchstone Energy cooperative values you as members. We work each day to be of worth to you. 

Dale F. Lambert is executive vice president and general manager of Randolph EMC, a Touchstone Energy cooperative serving more than 31,000 members in Alamance, Chatham, Montgomery, Moore and Randolph counties. He also is vice chairman of the Competitive Issues Committee for the state’s electric cooperatives.



The power of human connections

On Jan. 13, Albemarle EMC employee David Gross came to my door, showed me his identification and alerted me of a mylar balloon bouquet entangled in the power lines and transformer on the pole in my yard. He advised me that mylar contains metal particles which, if rubbed together, could cause sparks and thus a possible fire, resulting in loss of power and line damage. He called for a truck to remove the balloons.

It was a very nice gesture for him to stop on his way home from work to take care of a potentially hazardous situation. He not only saved me from loss of power, but also saved our co-op from expense if a fire had occurred.

When the bucket truck arrived, they safely removed the balloon bouquet.

I'm sure whoever those balloons were meant for had a disappointment on that day, but your thoughtful employee saved me from the disappointment of losing power.

Dona Yunker, Elizabeth City

How to fix the problem

Letha Humphrey had such a wonderful thought in suggesting everyone adopt an animal to help with the overpopulation problem in our country, and it is obvious that she has a deep love for animals ["First Person," February 2006]. Her idea might actually work, since there are around 300 million people compared to 9 to 12 million animals put to sleep each year in the U.S.

What struck me was her mention of kittens. I hope that each of her animals has been "fixed" and that each of those kittens will be fixed as soon as they are old enough. One cat can produce 420,000 cats in seven years if left unspayed or un-neutered. (This number includes the kittens that each of the kittens would produce, etc.) One dog left unaltered can produce 67,000 dogs in six years.

The responsibility for the overpopulation of animals in this country lies not so much with people who won't adopt an animal but with owners who refuse to have their animals spayed or

neutered. If all pet owners were to take this important step with each of their pets, then we truly would solve the overpopulation problem in the United States. (Source for data: AnimalKind, Humane Society of the United States).

Susan Cochran, Timberlake

For information about spaying and neutering, contact your veterinarian, county animal control department or local humane society.

Helping to prevent meth production

Thank you for your good article on methamphetamine labs in the January issue of Carolina Country. I am glad to see attention brought to this topic and to the dangers meth labs present to law enforcement officers, first responders and the citizens of local communities. As chair of the House Judiciary IV Committee, I worked with my colleagues to develop a strong and comprehensive bill to help prevent methamphetamine production in North Carolina. As a result, House Bill 248—Meth Lab Prevention Act—passed during the 2005 session went into effect on Jan. 15, 2006.

Jennifer Weiss, NC General Assembly



Looking out

We were looking out the living room window at Tommy's and Jean's land. The front yard is a point of land that sticks out into a feeder creek for Wilson Lake. The view is beautiful, and it's especially inviting when the winter wind is blowing in over the water and the warm sun is shining.

Philip Farris, Fayetteville

Another view of Lincoln

I am writing to comment on the article entitled "Abraham Lincoln: A Tar Heel?" in the February 2006 issue. The article describes various theories concerning Lincoln's possible birth in rural North Carolina.

Personally, I have absolutely no desire that North Carolina claim this state as Abraham Lincoln's birthplace. Let Kentucky (and Illinois) have him. Over 140 years of propaganda and politically-correct myth-making have elevated Lincoln to almost sainthood.

I consider Lincoln to be at the bottom of the barrel. He waged aggressive war (the so-called Civil War) on his own people that effectively destroyed the original voluntary Union of states. Early on, Lincoln billed the war as a crusade to save the Union. The real reason for his war was to destroy federalism and states' rights and create a more centralized government. Lincoln thought he could accomplish this with a short war without even addressing the slavery issue. His huge miscalculation cost some 620,000 American lives, but it more importantly changed the character of our government from a decentralized republic to a centralized government beholden to no one. Oh yes, slavery: Lincoln freed no one with his Emancipation Proclamation. The Thirteenth Amendment (ratified well after his death) accomplished that goal.

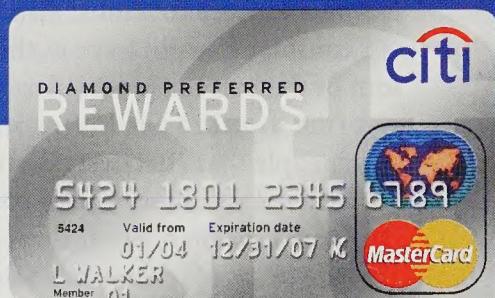
In his foreword to Thomas DiLorenzo's "The Real Lincoln," Walter E. Williams put it best when he stated that Abraham Lincoln's title should be the Great Centralizer instead of the Great Emancipator. It took the Romans centuries to destroy their republic and replace it with an empire; it only took Lincoln four years to do the same for us.

Walter L. Adams Jr., Trenton

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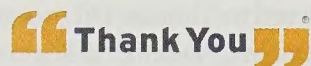
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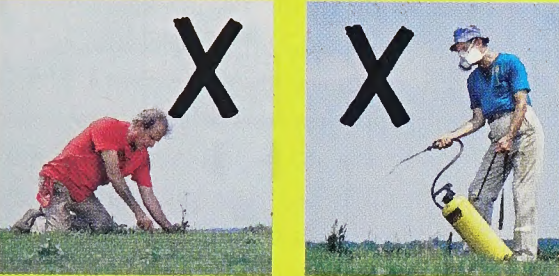
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7 Ways Your Zoysia Grass Lawn Saves You Time, Work, and Money!

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In PA, Mrs. M.R. Mitter wrote "I've never watered it, only when I put the plugs in...Last summer we had it mowed 2 times...When everybody's lawns here are brown from drought, ours stays as green as ever." *That's how zoysia lawns cut water bills and mowing! Now read on!*

2 ENDS RE-SEEDING NEVER NEEDS REPLACEMENT

Plug in our zoysia grass and you'll never have to spend money on grass seed again! Since you won't be buying seeds, you won't need to dig and rake—then hope the seeds take root before birds eat them or the next hard rain washes them away.

3 NO NEED TO DIG UP OLD GRASS

Plant Amazon in old lawn, new ground, whatever. Set 1" square plugs into holes in the soil 1 foot apart, checkerboard style. Plugs spread to drive out old, unwanted growth, weeds included. Easy instructions with your order. If you can put a cork into a bottle, you can plug in Amazon.

4 FOR SLOPES, PLAY AREAS, AND BARE SPOTS

You can't beat Amazon as the low cost answer for hard-to-cover spots, play-worn areas, or to end erosion on slopes.

5 IT STAYS GREEN IN SPITE OF HEAT AND DROUGHT

"The hotter it gets, the better it grows!" Plug-in zoysia thrives in blistering heat, yet it won't winter kill to 30° below zero. It just goes off its green color after killing frosts, begins regaining its green color as temps. in the spring are consistently warm. Of course, this varies with climate.



Thrives from part shade to full sun.

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Read a guarantee no grass seed can match!

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Any plug failing to grow in 45 days will be replaced FREE! To insure maximum freshness and viability, plugs are shipped not cut all the way through. Before planting, finish the separation with shears or knife. Our guarantee and planting method are your assurance of lawn success backed by more than five decades of specialized lawn experience!

6 CHOKES OUT CRABGRASS AND WEEDS ALL SUMMER

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7 NO NEED TO SPEND MONEY ON DANGEROUS CHEMICALS

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Manufactured home tips: inspecting your crawl space



The crawl space under your mobile or manufactured home offers access to some of the home's most important energy details. To see if you can manage your electric bill better, energy expert

Chris Dorsi, of Saturn Resource Management, says it's worth taking the time to inspect this often-neglected area.

If your manufactured home has skirting installed around the edges, find an access point where you can either open a hinged door or remove a piece of skirting. The best place to enter is usually near the center of the home, where you will have good access to the plumbing and to the area under your furnace.

Dorsi advises the following inspection. It's a good idea to wear sturdy clothes and bring a bright light.

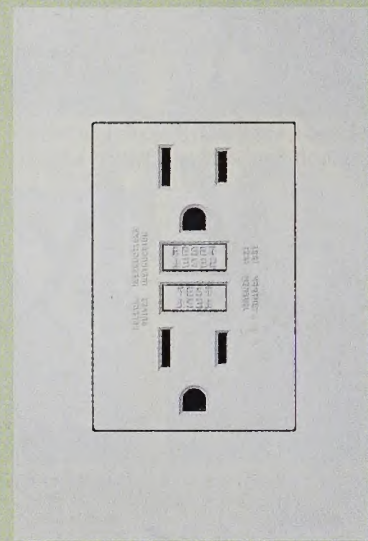
Ductwork. Your mobile home's ductwork is probably installed beneath the floor. Check to see if any of this ductwork is exposed and or if any joints are loose or disconnected. Check carefully at the area immediately under your heating system. If you live in a double-wide, inspect the "cross-over duct" that connects the heating system in each half of the home. If you find disconnected ducts or loose joints, seal them up with metal duct tape or with duct mastic. Avoid common gray fabric



"duct tape" since it tends to come loose.

Insulation. Your home was designed and built with insulation in the floor, and a layer of fiberboard or "belly paper" to protect this insulation and the plumbing lines above it. This protective layer often gets damaged by animals, wind or workers who go under there. This leaves the home exposed to outdoor air that robs energy in both winter and summer, and allows the floor insulation to get damaged. Replace any missing insulation with fiberglass batts, bulky material made from fabric, or other fibers used for padding and stuffing, then repair any damage you find in the belly. Use plywood and screws to repair any damaged fiberboard. Use belly paper (purchased at a home supply shop) and construction adhesive to repair any torn paper.

Chris Dorsi is a nationally recognized author of energy efficiency books, including "Surviving the Seasons" and "Residential Energy: Cost Savings and Comfort for Existing Buildings." (For more information, visit his Web site www.srmi.biz.)



Remember electrical safety outdoors

While the weather may be right for home improvement, your electrical system might not be ready for safe power tool use.

Ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) are fast-acting circuit breakers that cut off power in less than $\frac{1}{40}$ of a second—enough time to save you from getting shocked in case of a ground fault. Your home may already have these in its outlets (shown above), but if not, GFCIs can be installed inexpensively. There are also portable types that can be connected either to the outlet or the cord of the tool itself.

Here are some other safety tips from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration for an accident-free do-it-yourselfer:

- Never carry a tool by the cord or yank the cord to unplug it.
- Keep cords away from heat, flammable substances and cutting edges.
- Use gloves and safety footwear and eyewear for every project.
- To avoid accidental starting, don't hold your finger on the switch when carrying a tool.
- Wait a few days after it rains to do outside work. Don't use tools in wet or damp locations.
- Keep work areas well lighted.
- Remove cords from areas where they could be a tripping hazard.
- Tag any damaged electric tools or wires and remove them from the work area.

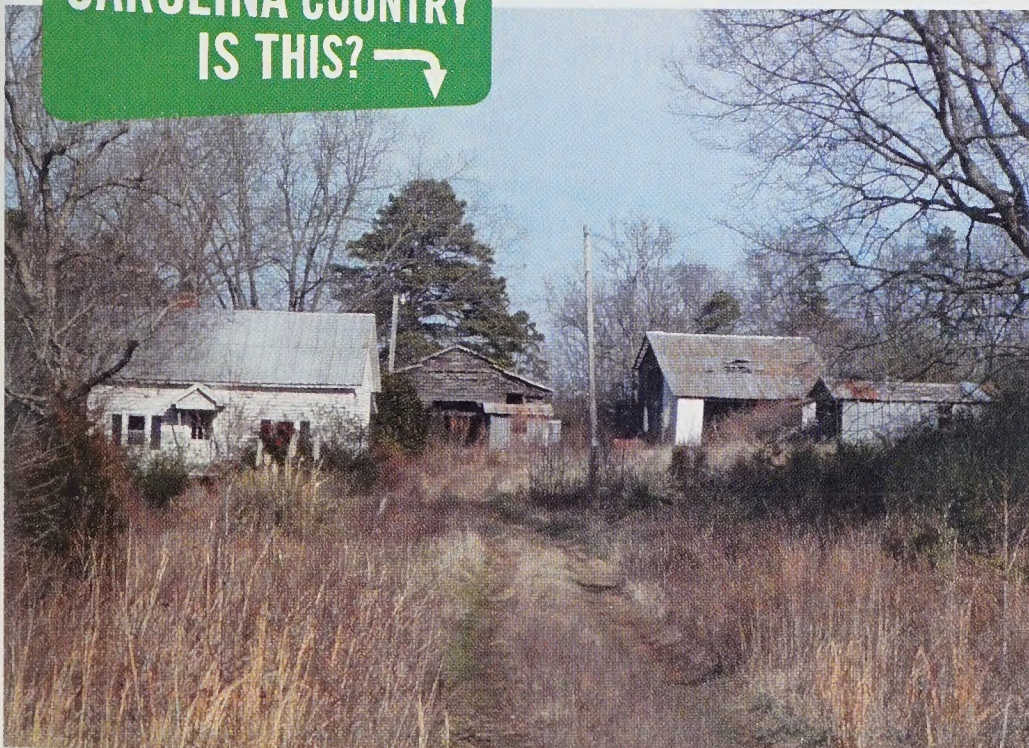
Do you know your SEER?

The federal government significantly raised energy efficiency standards for air conditioners in January. And a recent survey indicates 90 percent of homeowners know nothing about it.

The 2005 Home Air Conditioning Test by Emerson, an air-conditioning manufacturer, also said only one out of 10 homeowners knows the seasonal energy efficiency ratio (SEER) of the family's air conditioner.

The SEER tells you how energy efficient your air conditioner is. The SEER rating is determined by dividing the air conditioner's total cooling output by the amount of energy it uses. The Department of Energy's new energy-efficiency standards mandate that all air conditioners manufactured after Jan. 23 must meet a minimum rating of 13 SEER, up 30 percent from the previous 10 SEER standard.

**WHERE IN
CAROLINA COUNTRY
IS THIS?** →



The Winner:

The scene in the February magazine showed the "Best Little Flea Market in North Carolina" on Chatham St. (Old Hwy. 70) west of Newport in Carteret County, in the Carteret-Craven Electric Cooperative area. Correct answers were numbered and the \$25 winner chosen at random was Hope DiStaola, of Locust, a member of Union Power Cooperative.

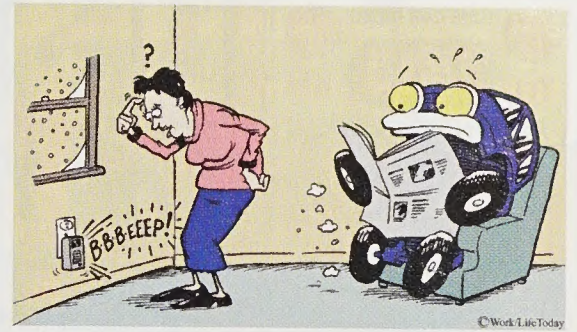
How to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning

Labeling harmful substances and keeping them away from kids aren't the only ways to observe Poison Prevention Week from March 20–26. The National Capital Poison Center says installing a carbon monoxide alarm could save your family from one of the most common household poisons.

Carbon monoxide is a clear, odorless gas that is deadly but hard to detect. If you don't have an alarm, install one now. Check it monthly to be sure it's working properly.

Carbon monoxide doesn't come just from cars. Your gas furnace or stove is a potential source of the gas. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency offers these tips for poison prevention:

- Keep gas appliances properly adjusted.
- Consider purchasing a vented space heater when replacing an unvented one.
- If you need a space heater, rely on electric ones, which do not burn gas or create carbon monoxide.
- Use proper fuel in kerosene space heaters.
- Install an exhaust fan, vented to the outdoors, over gas stoves.
- Open flues when fireplaces are in use.
- Choose properly sized wood stoves that are certified to meet EPA emission standards. Make sure wood stove doors fit tightly.
- Have a trained professional inspect, clean and tune up your central heating system—including furnaces, flues and chimneys—annually. Repair leaks promptly.
- Do not idle your car inside the garage.



This is a Carolina Country scene in Touchstone Energy territory. If you know where it is, send your answer by March 8 with your name, address, phone number and the name of your electric cooperative.

By e-mail: where@carolinacountry.com

Or by mail: Where in Carolina Country?
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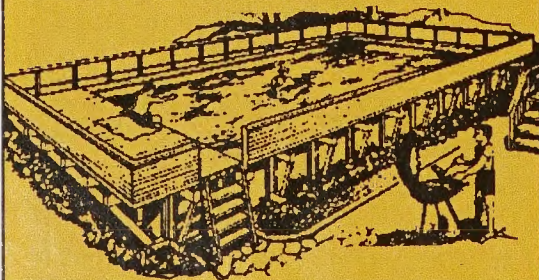
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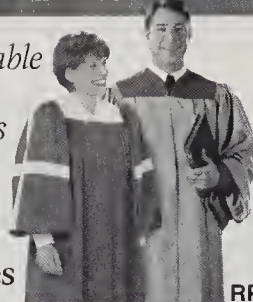
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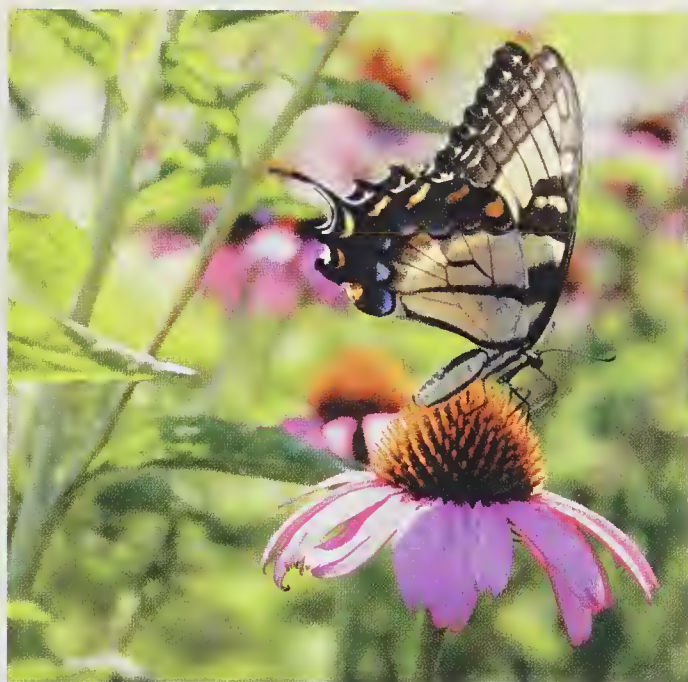
ANNUAL GARDENING GUIDE

Gardening requires a lot of water—mostly in the form of perspiration. Experienced gardeners know that all that leafy, flowering beauty comes at a labor-intensive price.

So spend your sweat wisely by studying up on Carolina Country's annual gardening guide. You'll find inspiration from three breathtaking public gardens. You'll discover a new method—ever grown your veggies in a straw bale? Plus your thoughts on why you garden: to build strength, feed your soul, not to mention tricking kids into eating their veggies.

No matter the reason, it's the spring season. So dig in!

Tryon Palace Historic Sites & Gardens



THREE PRETTY ONES

North Carolina's public gardens are inspiring and enlightening

By Karen Olson House

Heritage gardens, Victorian gardens, wildflower gardens, rose gardens, rock gardens, sensory gardens, perennial gardens, botanical gardens—our fertile state has them all, in growing splendor. Visiting them means discovering unexpected treasures, and invariably, you'll want to linger.

For a long list of gardens open to the public, North Carolina's Division of Tourism offers a free color brochure called "Heritage Gardens of North Carolina." It includes descriptions, a map, and town and garden contact numbers. Call (800) 847-4862 (800-VISIT NC) or download a copy at www.visitnc.com

Here's a look at what's offered this spring at three perennial favorites, popular with amateur and professional gardeners alike. We suggest you call ahead or check their Web sites for the most up-to-date information.

NORTH CAROLINA ARBORETUM, ASHEVILLE

Small trees are a big attraction at the North Carolina Arboretum in Asheville, which recently opened a beautiful, new bonsai exhibit. The Arboretum's diverse collection of more than 100 display-quality bonsai trees and more than a hundred plants-in-training features native Appalachian plants such as red maple and eastern white pine.

Walking on a lighted boardwalk path and through a courtyard with attractive stonework, visitors to the Bonsai Exhibition Garden learn about the art of bonsai through interpretive signs. There is also an open-air pavilion for demonstrations, classes and exhibits.

The 432-acre arboretum, nestled in a natural setting amid the Appalachian mountains, is a busy center for education, research, conservation and economic development. It offers 10 miles of forested hiking and biking trails, guided weekly tours of the garden, trail and greenhouse, as well as classes, craft demonstrations and behind-the-scenes tours of new facilities.

Visitors can explore 65 acres of cultivated gardens with Appalachian Mountain themes, including:

Plants of Promise Garden

This garden showcases superior plants for the North Carolina region and offers ideas for growing a garden at the woodland edge.



Quilt Garden, North Carolina Arboretum, Asheville

Stream Garden

This design, featuring native plant species and cultivated varieties, centers on a mountain stream.

Quilt Garden

It translates traditional quilt patterns into seasonal floral exhibits. This year's featured pattern is "Flower Basket."

Heritage Garden

Currently in expansion and slated for a late spring reopening, it features plants valuable to the heritage of western North Carolina.

Visitor Information

Café: The arboretum's "Savory Thyme Café" serves sandwiches, soups, salads, baked goods, locally roasted and fresh-brewed coffee, tea, juices and sodas. The atrium has great views of the Bent Creek Watershed. Visitors can picnic outdoors.

Wheelchair Access: Buildings, gardens and some trails are wheelchair

accessible. Wheelchairs are available free of charge on-site, on a first-come, first-served basis.

Hours of Operation: Arboretum grounds are open seven days a week. Property hours are 8 a.m. to 9 p.m., April–October; and 8 a.m. to 7 p.m., November–March. The Visitor Education Center is open Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and on Sundays from noon to 5 p.m.

Admission: Parking is \$6 per personal motor vehicle, \$25 for commercial vans and \$45 for buses. No parking fee for



Quilt Garden, North Carolina
Arboretum, Asheville

N.C. Arboretum Society members. All day Tuesday, parking is free.

Location: Just outside Asheville, the Arboretum is located next to the Blue Ridge Parkway entrance ramp at Milepost 393.

Upcoming Events:

- 🌿 *Orchid Show & Sneak Peek at Spring*, Saturday–Sunday, March 25–26. Activities include walks, demonstrations and orchid sale. Horticulturists will be on hand to answer questions.
- 🌿 *Arbor Day Celebration*, Saturday–Sunday, April 29–30. Activities include displays, walks and demonstrations and a tree seedling giveaway.

(828) 665-2492 🌿 www.ncarboretum.org

SARAH P. DUKE GARDENS, DURHAM

Sarah P. Duke Gardens, spoken of as the “Crown Jewel of Duke University,” occupies 55 acres. It is renowned for landscape design and the quality of horticulture, each year attracting more than 300,000 visitors.

During spring, see blazes of colorful redbuds, cherry, crabapple and dogwood trees, hyacinths, daffodils, tulips, peonies, camellias and wisteria at the gardens. Petunias, daylilies, begonias and other annuals and perennials flower through the summer, with hundreds of rose bushes and azaleas providing glorious banks of color.

In the fall, gardens glow with more than 7,000 chrysanthemums. Winter displays dramatic barks, berries and evergreens.

For adults, the gardens offer innovative programs including lectures, classes, guided walks, workshops, off-site tours, symposia and trips. A schedule of classes is published twice a year.

For children, special programs and guided tours reveal the interconnections between plants, animals and people. Kids can participate in scavenger hunts, sensory walks, games, story times and more.

Visitors can explore three major sections of Sarah P. Duke Gardens, which offer five miles of pathways and allées (walks specially bordered by a graceful grouping of trees or clipped hedges):

Terrace Gardens

Most first-time visitors start by strolling the Linden Allée to the Rose Garden.

Other features include a Perennial Allée, a pair of ornamental stone garden cottages, a delightfully irregular fish pond and rock garden. Beyond the pond is a Dawn Redwood, long believed to be extinct and one of the largest specimens in America.

Culberson Asiatic Arboretum

This tract of 20 acres features approximately 550 specimens and cultivars of Asian plants, including special collections of deciduous magnolias and Japanese maples. The arboretum is embellished with stone lanterns throughout, with a popular zig-zag bridge along a lake, a teahouse shelter, rock-rimmed pond, foot bridge and a Japanese entrance gateway.

H.L. Blomquist Garden of Native Plants

Situated in a 6.5-acre woodland setting of mature southern yellow pines, it contains more than 900 species and varieties of regional native plants. The focal point is the Blomquist Pavilion, a graceful garden shelter beside a spring-fed pond.

Visitor Information

Café: Housed in one of the Terrace Garden’s attractive stone cottages bordered by low stone walls, the “Terrace Café” sells sandwiches, salads, snacks, ice cream and drinks.

Wheelchair Access: Much here is suitable for the physically challenged, and there are resting benches. But note there are many changes in slope, some loose gravel on paths, and some steps. For \$25, trolley tours are available Monday to Friday if scheduled in advance. Call (919) 668-1705.

Hours of Operation: The Gardens are open daily 8 a.m. to dusk. The Doris Duke Center is open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday, and noon to 5 p.m. on Sunday.

Admission: The gardens are open free. During certain hours, visitors pay for parking usually set by the hour.

Location: The gardens are in Duke University’s West



Bog, Sarah P. Duke Gardens, Durham



The Latham Garden, Gardens of Tryon Palace, New Bern Campus, adjacent to Duke University Medical Center, in Durham. The entrance is off Anderson Rd.

Upcoming Events:

- ☛ *Birdwalk*, March 11. Held in the H.L. Blomquist Garden.
- ☛ *Plant and Craft Festival*, May 6. Features plant, craft and food vendors, entertainment and a plant info booth.

(919) 684-3698 ☛ www.hr.duke.edu/dukegardens

GARDENS AT TRYON PALACE, NEW BERN

A part of the past grows here at Tryon Palace Historic Sites and Gardens, with its 18th century-style gardens of native plants that greeted European settlers, its Victorian-era displays, and 20th century interpretations of earlier periods.

Tryon is a North Carolina State Historic Site that includes seven major buildings and 14 acres of gardens. The main palace was built between 1767 and 1770 as the home for William Tryon, the British governor of the North Carolina colony, in the colony's first permanent capital at New Bern.

Each spring, tulips are a big Palace draw. About 10,000 of these colorful, fabled flowers should be in bloom the first two weeks in April.

With 14 acres of grounds and gardens, visitors can choose from 13 themed gardens. Some of the more popular Palace gardens include:

The Kitchen Garden

The kitchen garden, with 18th century varieties of vegetables, herbs and fruit trees, offers produce almost year-round. Cool-weather crops visible in March include broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, kale and kohlrabi. Herbs include several varieties of mint, lavender, oregano and rosemary. In summer you'll see beans, cucumbers, eggplant, tomatoes, melons,

artichokes and watermelons. Fruit trees include apple, plum, pear and fig.

The Kellenberger Garden

The walled Kellenberger Garden includes plants that might have appeared in original Palace gardens. Mostly perennials are displayed here, including hellebores and dianthus. Spring annuals include violas, johnny jump-ups and pot marigolds.

Latham Garden

The Latham is a formal English garden where clipped hedges, flowers and paths form patterns that define the distinctive "parterre" garden. Statues of the four seasons survey displays of spring bulbs, summer annuals, annuals and fall chrysanthemums. The center beds, edged in yaupon holly, overflow with colorful tulips and daffodils in the spring. The garden also displays many species of irises.

Stoney Garden

The Stoney Garden features old-fashioned perennials and antique roses of varieties known to have graced New Bern gardens in the 19th-century.

Visitor Information

Wheelchair Access: The gardens are accessible to all visitors. Call ahead to discuss special needs.

Hours of Operation: Now until Memorial Day weekend Palace buildings and gardens are open Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sunday from 1 to 5 p.m. The last guided tour begins at 4 p.m. daily. Summer hours (Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend) are Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sunday from 1 to 5 p.m. The last guided tour begins at 4 p.m. daily. The gardens are open until 7 p.m. Tickets are sold until 4:30 p.m.

Admission: Admission to all gardens, the blacksmith shop, stables and kitchen office, is \$8 for adults and \$3 for students grades 1–12. Admission to all buildings and gardens is \$15 for adults and \$5 for students.

Location: New Bern, in the heart of historic downtown. Tryon Palace's Visitor Center is at the corner of Pollock and George Streets. 📍

Upcoming Events:

- ☛ *New Bern Homes & Gardens Tour*, April 7–9. The gardens at Tryon Palace are open free during the duration of this tour (which charges a fee).
- ☛ *Heritage plant sale*, April 7–9. Relatively inexpensive plants, grown from palace garden cuttings.

(800) 767-1560 ☛ www.tryonpalace.org/gardens.html

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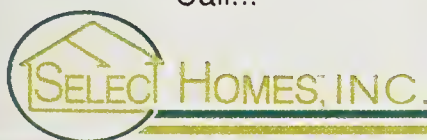
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HOW TO GROW A STRAW BALE GARDEN

By Kent Rogers

Kent Rogers of Wake Forest has successfully cultivated a vegetable garden in bales of straw. Carolina Country's report on his idea last year drew attention from gardeners and others across the state. Kent points out that the method produces good-looking, healthy plants without weeds, and is especially convenient for people who don't have a large plot of ground to till, or who are physically unable to do a lot of kneeling, bending, raking and hoeing. Here is some of his advice for people interested in straw bale gardening.

You can start your garden with seeds if you use some topsoil on top of the bales, but I transplanted all of my vegetables from flats and trays purchased from local nurseries.

I initially used 20 bales of wheat straw. The plants in the wheat straw were doing so well that I got 10 more bales of oat straw to see how that would do. (Pine straw won't work.)

I recommend getting bales that have been tightly baled. The oat straw bales I bought were lighter and baled looser than the wheat straw, and I learned that they don't hold as much water. I paid about \$2.50 for each bale.

Use bales that have synthetic twine if you can find them. The twine won't rot and it will hold the bales together longer. If the bales use regular twine, that's no problem. You may have to put a stake at the end of the bales. The bales I used had regular twine, and they started to rot and break, but I arranged 10 in each row, so the bales tend to hold each other together.

I oriented my bales with the strings off the ground. You can do it either way, but I like the twine off the ground. The transplanting seemed easier with the bales oriented with the strings off the ground. You can decide which way to orient yours.

If you make more than one row of bales, put them wide enough apart so your lawnmower can get between them. And because you'll be watering them, I recommend placing the bales where the water will drain away from your house or away from where you'll be walking.

How many plants per bale? Try two tomato plants per bale, three peppers, two squash, two sets of cucumbers.

Be prepared to stake the tomatoes and peppers. I recommend 6-foot stakes for the tomatoes. I used tobacco sticks last year, but they are too short. My tomatoes grew way over the tobacco sticks.

I didn't plant any okra last year, but they will probably do well. You'll definitely have to stake them.

I don't think corn will work too well. The plants will be too top-heavy.

I water the bales in the morning and after sunset. You can't over-water because any excess will just run out of the bales. Soaker hoses will work. The main thing is not to let the bales get dried out between watering.

I started out using some Miracle Grow once a week for a couple of weeks. Then I sprinkled in some 10-10-10. You don't want to over fertilize.

The bales will start to sprout wheat or oat straw, but that is no problem. If the grass gets too much for you, just whack it off with a knife. I give my bales a "haircut" every so often with a steak knife. It takes no time at all.

One thing I've noticed—and this could be just a fluke—is I have not had to spray my plants with any pesticides such as Liquid Sevin. I haven't had any worms, bugs or other pest bother my straw bale garden. Maybe it has something to do with the plants being off the ground. 🌱

Kent Rogers is a member of Wake Electric, a Touchstone Energy cooperative. You can contact him by mail at 13028 Powell Rd, Wake Forest, NC 27587, and by e-mail at kent.rogers@earthlink.net



It takes 10 days to prepare your bales.

Days 1–3: Water the bales thoroughly and keep them wet.

Days 4–6: Sprinkle the bales with ½ cup of ammonium nitrate (32-0-0) per bale per day, and water it well into the bales. I didn't have any trouble finding ammonium nitrate from my local ag-supply store. They sold it in 40-pound bags. I have heard, however, that some people have had difficulty finding it in more urban settings. Ask around.

Days 7–9: Cut back to ¼ cup of ammonium nitrate per bale per day and continue to water it in well.

Day 10: No more ammonium nitrate, but do add 1 cup of 10-10-10 fertilizer per bale and water it in well.

Day 11: Transplant your plants into the bales. I used a spatula to make a crack in the bale for each plant. Place the plant down to its first leaf and close the crack back together as best you can.

Web links to articles on straw bale gardening:

www.nicholsgardennursery.com/strawbales.htm

www.county.ces.uga.edu/chatham/hay_bales.htm

www.co.clay.mn.us/Depts/Extensio/ExAPHydr.htm

GARDENERS, DON YOUR GLOVES

And get into gardening season with these spring tips

MARCH

- ☞ When starting a new lawn, add and mix in soil conditioners and fertilizers. Conditioners improve soil by increasing moisture and fertilizer holding capacity. Organic materials that can be used as soil conditioners include old sawdust, cotton gin waste, peanut hulls and sewer sludge.
- ☞ Trees like to be transplanted before the end of March. In mid-and-upper South, April is satisfactory.
- ☞ When planting trees, make the planting hole at least two feet deeper and wider than the ball. It's helpful to add some peat moss mixed with soil.
- ☞ Spring marks fertilizing time for evergreen trees and shrubs as well as deciduous trees and shrubs that didn't receive fall feedings. Individual shrubs need two to four cups of complete fertilizer, such as 5-10-10, 8-8-8 or 10-6-4. Small plants need less; large plants need more. Rake back mulch, apply fertilizer and replace mulch.
- ☞ Plant moon vine (*Calonyction aculeatum*) after the last hard freeze for beautiful, perfumed white flowers that open at night.
- ☞ On mild days, move houseplants outdoors to a semi-shaded spot for a few hours to let them acclimate to the upcoming outdoor vacation.
- ☞ Sow the seeds of certain flowering annuals directly into well-prepared flowerbeds. These include: alyssum, poppy, cornflower, globe amaranth, and strawflower, which is popular for dried arrangements in winter.
- ☞ Start bedding plants indoors for late planting outside. In a few weeks, these slow-to-bloom annuals will be available at garden centers: candytuft, rudbeckia, verbena and gaillardia.
- ☞ Till your vegetable garden now. Organic matter and compost piled on soil during winter months need to be turned under. Along with liberal amounts of complete fertilizer (unless a soil test shows the need for a special mix), this provides a good area for growing vegetables. After prepar-



ing the ground, set out cabbages, collard plants, Irish potatoes and onions. Sow seeds of mustards, radishes, chives, English peas, leaf lettuce, beets, carrots, radishes, chard, kale, spinach, including New Zealand spinach, and turnips. Wait another month for the soil to warm up before planting seedlings of eggplants, peppers and tomatoes.

- ☞ After planting strawberries, pinch off any blooms that appear the first year to concentrate energy toward devel-

oping strong roots and runners. Next year, plants will be established enough to produce a quality crop.

APRIL

- ☞ It's a good time to plant corn, snap beans, okra and squash. Also set transplants of tomatoes and sweet peppers.
- ☞ Herbs generally grown for culinary use are: chives, lemon basil, dill, marjoram, rosemary, mint, lemon verbena, sweet basil, summer savory, peppermint and sage.
- ☞ If vegetables are allowed to overmature in the garden, plants will go into a rest period. Continue to pick pole beans, okra, squash and cucumbers. A bonus is that small, young vegetables are tastier to the palate.
- ☞ Perennial vegetables such as thorny asparagus and Jerusalem artichokes are planted just once, but harvested for years to come.
- ☞ If you've not grown fruit before, strawberries and blueberries are good starter plants that require little or no chemicals.
- ☞ Consider adding heirloom plants to your garden. Often among the most carefree and hardy of plants, unlike newer varieties, these time-tested favorites have had decades or even hundreds of years to adapt to local growing conditions.
- ☞ After a few years of growth, forsythia plants tend to decline in flower production. It is helpful to apply a cup of 5-10-5 commercial fertilizer this month.
- ☞ When two or three sets of leaflets are visible on seedlings in a seed container, they may be transplanted to individual pots for further growth.

- When grown as potted plants, hydrangeas tend to become root bound if left in the same pot for several years. Hydrangeas grow best and produce more blooms in the open.
- Keep grass away from tree trunks for the first few years. Competition with grasses can reduce root growth of young trees by as much as 50 percent.
- Never disturb the root system of a tree. Any digging or hoeing, which damages roots, can slow tree growth considerably.
- Apply an extra layer of mulch such as pine straw or pine bark to newly planted trees and shrubs. This reduces evaporation, helps roots adjust, and slows down weed growth in the spring.
- Intermixing marigolds and nasturtiums with vegetables will discourage nematodes and side shoots growing from main shoots.
- Flowers for heavy shade include: impatiens (patience plant), sultana, Vinca rosea (Madagascar periwinkle), wax begonia, foxglove, lobelia, basalm, nemophilia (baby-blue eyes) and godetia.
- During growing season, control size and encourage development of a compact plant by keeping long, wispy growth pruned back.
- It's safest to rotate the location of annuals year after year, as with tomatoes. A three-year rotation, using unrelated plants, helps control soil-borne diseases.
- Repair thin or bare lawn spots in play areas or other spots subject to heavy traffic. If the spot is too thin, loosen soil several inches deep with a spading fork. This allows air, water and fertilizer to move into the soil.
- The best and easiest to grow of the flowering perennial vines include: hybrid clematis, autumn clematis, silver-lace vine, honeysuckle, wisteria and trumpet creeper.
- Lantanas are effective groundcovers for steep slopes; they are also a good choice for stone walls. These plants prefer full sun and fertile soil.

MAY

- Great annual vines include cypress vine, black-eyed Susan vine and vining nasturtium.
- Keep small clematis plants in pots for the first year, either above ground or buried to give young roots a cozier place to start. Prune new transplants to the lowest pair of strong buds.
- You don't have to step on a rusty nail to get tetanus. Tetanus bacteria lurk in garden soil—all it takes is a cut, scrape or splinter to invite infection. It's easy to avoid this potentially deadly disease: Make sure you are vaccinated at least every 10 years.



- Such native perennials as purple coneflowers, black-eyed Susans, phlox, verbenas and bee balm are premium butterfly flowers, and as a bonus are no-fuss.
- Salvias are irresistible to hummingbirds: Try pineapple sage, which has red blooms in early fall, and black-and-blue salvia, with flowers of rich dark-blue throughout summer.
- Refrain from deadheading some of your purple coneflowers, and you'll tempt goldfinches to visit the porcupine-like seed cones.
- Electric push mowers are less messy than gas mowers and start at the flip of a switch. These mowers are inexpensive to operate (\$3–\$6 a year)

and environmentally friendly.

- Improper mowing not only leaves a bad-looking lawn, but it's an invitation to weeds, diseases and other problems. Evenness of cut is essential to good looks. Mowing height and frequency are essential for good health.
- Turf specialists recommend mowing often enough to remove about a half-inch, or no more than one-third of the green leaf surface.
- If eggplants and bell peppers are among family favorites, plant two or three plants of each. They take up relatively little space and bear until frost.
- Cutworms can cause severe damage to tomato plants. Gardeners have used milk cartons, pieces of wax paper wrapped around stems and aluminum foil to protect young plants.
- These shade-loving herbs are adapted to growth on the north side of buildings or other shady spots: liverwort, red baneberry, blue cohosh, cardinal flower, ginseng, dutchman's breeches, maidenhair fern, goldenseal, Jack-in-the-Pulpit and mountain laurel.
- Choice perennials for sunny spots include daylilies, hardy hibiscus, ornamental grasses, blue false indigo (*Baptista australis*), Russian sage (*Perovskia* sp.), "Autumn Joy" sedum, "Goldstrum," black-eyed Susan, bloody cranebil (*Geranium sanguineum*), and crocosmia. Good choices for shady spots include hostas, Japanese roof iris (*Iris tectorum*), Lenten roses, ferns, Japanese anemone, and variegated fragrant Solomon's Seal (*Polygonatum odoratum*).

- May through September is a critical period for azaleas and camellias. Soil around roots should never be allowed to become completely dry. Water slowly with a soil soaker once a week during hot dry weather, more often if soil dries out quickly.
- Remove faded blooms when they appear on bedding plants and shrubs. 🌱



Tips taken from past gardening guide columns by Hank Smith and Carla Burgess.

"IT'S EVERYTHING THERE IS TO KNOW ABOUT LIFE"

And other true confessions of why you tend a garden

Well if you need a boost to get yourself out into the garden this year, just read what we have here. Planning, tending, picking, preserving, giving it away and getting help—for some reason it's all good. If only we had the space to publish more of these, we could brighten your day for months. We did add more to our Web site.

BECAUSE OF MABEL

Surrounding our home is one of the most beautiful flower gardens in Person County.

In the middle of the backyard stands a huge black walnut tree, the largest of its kind in North Carolina. It is estimated to be centuries old. Around the base of the tree, like a colorful wreath, are seasonal flowers, such as impatiens in the summer and colorful shades of pansies in the spring—all planted by my wife, Mabel.

Other colorful and fragrant flowering plants grown and cultivated by my wife during the growing season attract interesting wildlife, such as birds that sing praises to their beauty. Plus hummingbirds, butterflies, bees and wasps enjoy their nectar.

The pleasure we enjoy from this surrounding beauty during our later years is due to my wife's determination to learn how to enrich the soil to cultivate healthy plants.



Herbert Garrett, Timberlake / Piedmont EMC

Thanks to everyone who contributed. Next month we'll publish your reports of the perfect place for a picnic. [Deadline was Feb. 15.] For other themes and rules of our "Nothing Could Be Finer" series, see page 24.



IN THE ZINNIAS

Gardening brings beauty and happiness. It's good for the soul. This is my mom and some of her dear friends in the zinnias.

Jan S. Clark, Indian Trail / Union Power Cooperative

TO LEARN ABOUT LIFE

Gardening is a leap of faith. You sow seeds with a positive attitude not knowing the outcome. You tend the garden faithfully even before you see results. Then, one day, two little leaves show their colors, and then there are four leaves. You feel a sense of accomplishment as the season moves along and you reap the rewards of your labor in the harvest.

When all is done, you tend to the garden beds to put them to rest. What I learned from gardening is everything there is to know about life: faith, patience, hard work, rewards and the universal cycle of life.

Gardening puts everything in perspective for growing up and becoming a fine person. It shows how everything and everyone cannot go it alone. We all need to work together to reap the rewards of life. At the end of our harvest, we rest like the garden, only to see the future in the generations and the past in our memories.

I'm a gardener because it fills my soul with happiness and accomplishment. When having a bad day, I just go to my garden and work it to feel right again.

Michele Strubeck, Waynesville / Haywood EMC

FOR STEPHEN

Growing up in rural North Carolina, gardening was a means of providing food for the family. My grandfather taught me how and when to plant in order to gain the best harvest. My mother and grandmother patiently taught me the fine art of canning, freezing and preserving. During the years of raising my own family, I continued that heritage. Canned goods, jellies and jams lined the pantry shelves to prove I had learned the lesson well.

However the love of being a gardener took on an entirely new meaning three years ago. Our oldest son died, his life unexpectedly over, a beautiful flower plucked right from the garden of our hearts. In an attempt to focus on living, we decided to plant a weeping willow tree in our yard in his memory. With this effort "Stephen's Garden" began. We planted all the flowers from his funeral. We built a gazebo as a place for quiet reflection. On Stephen's birthday or Father's Day or any other day that we feel the need, his children and I make garden stones. We tenderly place them in the garden and watch our memories grow. The harvest has been one of acceptance and appreciation. Acceptance of growing a different garden and appreciation for precious memories that thrive there.

Betsy Hinson, Gastonia

RAISING A SON AND A GARDEN

At the time, my son was 5 years old and a finicky eater. He just did not like any kind of vegetable. So I made a plan. I told him that we would go to the seed store in the spring and he could pick out as many packets of seeds as he wanted as long as we ate everything that we grew. Of all the colorful packets in the displays, we came home with a bundle. That year he worked with me planting, waiting for the seeds to sprout, watering and weeding. We had an enormous crop.

Ever since that year he is the one who makes sure we have our potatoes started on time, that we have a healthy mixture of summer vegetables for the table, and that we have enough extra so that we can enjoy our preserved food through the winter. He enjoys everything from our first peas to our last turnips and cabbage. Sometimes it pays to be tricky.

Larry Strap, Durham | Wake EMC

TO STAY FOREVER STRONG

I have been gardening since I was 15 years old. I am now 93 and still raise most of my vegetables and share them with friends, relatives and neighbors. I like to see things grow. I raise turnips, green peas, field peas, white potatoes, sweet potatoes, cabbage, cauliflower, corn, tomatoes, yellow squash, zucchini, peppers, pears, grapes and blackberries. All work is done with a tiller, rake and hoe.

I thank God for the strength and ability at my age.

Theodore Coppee, Newport | Carteret-Craven Electric Cooperative

SO DAD CAN KEEP WATCH

My mom and dad have been the real reason I enjoy gardening. My parents always seemed to have flowers and vegetables growing around the farm. Dad's mom had a real green thumb, and he seemed to have inherited it from her. Although Mom was busy raising two young'ns and Dad farmed and then worked off the farm for years, we put something in the ground each spring. He retired from Lowe's Home Improvement in 2003 at age 82 because of health problems, but with a lot of help from Mom he put in his garden in 2004. He said that garden was his "physical and mental therapy" and would keep him going.

They filled up any available piece of ground and pot with flowers and vegetables. Many times when he was too sick to be outside or had to spend a few days in the hospital, we would talk for hours about the next garden he would put in, or what I should try in my garden here in the mountains.

Dad died in October 2005. This picture was made in 2004 in his last garden. He and Mom had a bumper crop of green beans that year. Mom and I canned, and Dad gave away more beans than I can ever remember in the years past. I think the look on their faces shows just how much they enjoyed what they were doing.

We're planning another garden this year, one on the farm and one up here at my house. I 'spect Dad will have a good seat helping us tend these gardens and watching them grow.



Karen Hargett Moll, Grassy Creek | Blue Ridge Electric

TO BE CLOSER TO THE LORD

Growing up on a farm, at age 9 I was given a small plot of land next to the family garden where I could grow flowers. I have continued for over 80 years. I enjoy the entire process of gardening: looking at the seed and flower catalogs in the winter, deciding what and where to plant, keeping the weeds out, then gathering in the items as they mature and sharing and selling the results. I have a small farmer's market at my home.

For me, gardening is pleasure and not work. I tell people that a little dust in the house does not bother me, but the weeds in the garden do. I am closer to my Lord while "playing" in the garden than anywhere else on earth.

Ruby McGee, Lenoir | Blue Ridge Electric

GETTING INTO IT WITH ASHTON AND LUKE

I love to till the soil and watch seeds sprout into plants and then grow to vegetables. I also love to watch my blueberries, grapes and pears produce fruit. We are able to freeze, can and preserve our fruits and vegetables so we can enjoy them all year.

I especially enjoy my grandsons helping me prepare the soil for planting. This is a picture of my 2-year-old grandson, Ashton Rasberry, helping me prepare the soil for planting.

He is "my little dirt farmer." As you can see he really gets into his work. We had dug our potatoes and were preparing our soil to plant another crop. He and his 5-year-old brother, Luke, help me do everything in the garden from tilling to gathering the vegetables. It is an education for them and a lot of fun for all of us when we are gardening. 

Dalton Tyndall, Walstonburg
Pitt & Greene EMC

Send us your best **Earn \$50**

Here are the themes in our "Nothing Could Be Finer" series. Send us your stories and pictures about these themes. If yours is chosen for publication, we'll send you \$50. You don't have to be the best writer. Just tell it from your heart.

May 2006

The Ugliest Lamp I Ever Saw

Send us the pictures.

Deadline: March 15

July 2006

I'll Never Eat That Again

A bad experience with food.

Deadline: May 15

June 2006

The Best Summer I Ever Had

By kids age 16 and younger.

Deadline: April 15

August 2006

How I Almost Flunked

What were you thinking.

Deadline: June 15

The Rules

1. Approximately 200 words or less.
2. One entry per household per month.
3. Photos are welcome. Digital photos must be 300 dpi and actual size.
4. E-mailed or typed, if possible. Otherwise, make it legible.
5. Include your name, electric co-op, mailing address and phone number.
6. If you want your entry returned, please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope. (We will not return others.)
7. We pay \$50 for each submission published. We retain reprint rights.
8. We will post on our Web site more entries than we publish, but can't pay for those submissions. (Let us know if you don't agree to this.)
9. Send to: Nothing Finer, Carolina Country, 3400 Sumner Blvd., Raleigh, NC 27616
Or by e-mail: finer@carolinacountry.com
Or through the Web: www.carolinacountry.com

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CONTAINER GARDENS

Putting plants in pots adds options

Text and photos by Dan Johnson

Gardening in containers can have a big impact and add a sophisticated, artsy feel to an otherwise average landscape. Even simple additions can create complexity and excitement in the garden.

The possibilities are vast. Most containers are portable enough that you can easily change the scene to suit an occasion, or divert the focus when part of the garden is past its prime. Plantings can change each year, creating different moods and combinations without re-landscaping the entire garden.

Container gardens can add height and dimension to any garden, and create an impact where there was only empty space. Consider the view from indoors as well. A lushly planted urn or bowl framed in your favorite window can bring the garden indoors and create a feeling of connection with the garden. If you aren't content with your container garden, changing or relocating is easy.

With that in mind, consider your passions next and look at the style of your garden. In your landscape, are you a collector of many small plants, or do you lean towards simple, big and bold? That may be your preference in your containers as well, but before you

get started, whichever one describes you, consider doing the opposite in your containers. This is an opportunity to try something new.

Nothing will add more energy to your garden than placing an element of contrast among the "sameness" that can exist. Be daring and create a new layer in your garden. This is a chance to branch out and experiment.

RANGE OF CONTAINER PLANTS AVAILABLE

The range of plants has never been easier to explore. Traditional and colorful annuals will blaze in containers all summer, and are standard fare for many gardeners, but there are other options. Fast growing tropics are often available at quite reasonable prices.

A young Majesty palm (*Ravenna rivularis*) may cost no more than a few six-packs of petunias, but it can have several times the impact. Bold, swaying grasses can create motion and energy in a static space. Cannas, Colocasia, Eucomis and other tender summer bulbs grow quickly and their large leaves can be an exotic contrast to the finer textures of many hardy perennials.

Cacti and succulent plants have a sculptural quality that is shown to great advantage when raised above garden level, and they thrive in well-drained containers. In much of the United States, many hardy cacti can remain in their containers in the garden all year as living works of art. This lifts their prickly pads and stems up out of surrounding vegetation and makes caring for them much easier.

Hardy conifers can lend stability and texture to a container grouping. Many dwarf types can remain for several seasons for a more permanent effect on a bal-



Bright blue containers add colorful focal points to the author's garden as a tangle of purple Rocky Mountain penstemon and variegated Iris pallidaburst with blooms.

cony or terrace. Larger sorts may be planted directly into the garden when their increasing size no longer suits the container. Either way, colorful and unique cultivars can be absolute treasures and stand apart all year as living sculptures.

There are few limits to your creativity when planting container gardens. Experiment with leaf shape and movement, color and texture, in combinations that you may not have tried before.

Remember that potted gardens can be flexible and colorful additions to a garden that needs that elusive "something extra." 🌿

Dan Johnson has been gardening for as long as he can remember, and has worked in the green industry for more than 25 years. His broad experience and formal training now include eight years with Denver (Colorado) Botanic Gardens Horticulture department, currently as curator of native plant collections where he designs and maintains numerous native and xeric gardens.

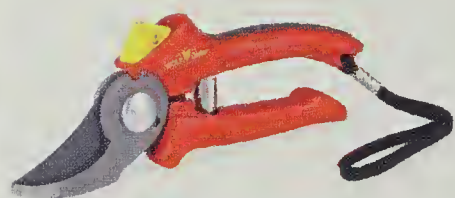


Containers of agaves contrast in color and texture with the tall, yellow "Prairie Sun" Rudbeckia (upper left) and the variegated fuchsia (center) in this garden.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Helpful gadgets make gardening even more fun

As the grass turns greener and the flowers begin to bloom, the garden pulls you to its warm dirt. It's time to dig in and get the garden going. It can be a lot of fun getting your hands dirty and helping plants to grow, but it's even more fun when it's easy. Try some of these useful gadgets to make it all less stressful and a lot more fun.



SPARE YOUR HANDS AND WRISTS

Use the right-hand Comfort Pruners for smooth, comfortable operation. Non-slip ergonomic handles, thumb-control blade lock, blades angled at 30 degrees and a cushioned shock absorber prevent fatigue. Visit www.gardeners.com or call 888-833-1412 to order the Comfort Pruners for \$24.95.



WATER EVERYWHERE

Use the Noodlehead sprinkler and you won't have to adjust the sprinkler every few minutes to reach the entire yard. The base has 12 flexible hoses that can spray 15 feet in any direction and will cover a total of 400 square feet. The Noodlehead sprinkler fits standard hoses and has a 6-inch anchor spike. You can also purchase the Extend-A-Riser, which allows the Noodlehead to extend up to 24 inches above the ground.

Visit www.charleysgreenhouse.com or call 800-322-4707 to purchase the Noodlehead sprinkler for \$19.95.



KNOW YOUR SOIL

Test your soil to determine its acidity level with the Soil Tester from Thompson & Morgan. Just place the soil in the tube and use the soil tester card to determine the pH level of your soil. This knowledge allows you to choose plants suitable to your soil. Each capsule can only be used once. A single capsule is \$1.95; buy two for \$3.90 and get one free. Visit www.thompson-morgan.com or call 800-274-7333 for details.



DIG THOSE HOLES FOR BULBS

Planting bulbs can be a true chore, but a new auger that can be attached to an electric drill makes digging easier.

The auger, called a Power Planter®, drills out a 3-inch diameter hole up to 7 inches deep. That's a perfect size for most bulbs, including tulips, hyacinths and daffodils. All you need is a 3/8-inch or larger power drill to operate it. For information, visit www.gardengatemagazine.com or call 217-379-2614.



PROTECT YOUR HANDS

Just apply a small amount of YardGlove® Barrier Lotion to your hands before working in your garden. Your hands will be protected and moisturized while you work and will clean more easily, especially around the cuticle and nails. The lotion can also be used on knees and feet, according to customers.

YardGlove® Barrier Lotion is all-natural, made of beeswax and oatmeal, and has a slight cucumber fragrance. It is greaseless and non-toxic, and has been tested by professional gardeners and nursery workers. For best results, apply YardGlove® just before you work in the garden. It will stay on your skin for several hours or until you wash it off with soap and water.

After a minute or so following application, you may notice a "talc" feel on your skin. This assures you that the protective barrier is in place and is already protecting your hands against the penetration of harmful compounds.

You can purchase YardGlove® Barrier Lotion at www.yardglove.com for \$8.95 for a four-ounce bottle, which lasts for more than 100 applications.



CONTINUOUS IRRIGATION

Newly planted trees and shrubs need many months of consistent watering to survive. Save time and get deep watering with these portable Irrigation Rings. Place the ring around the base of the tree trunk and fill it with a hose. Small holes in the bag gradually drip water over 4 to 8 hours (8 to 10 hours with 20-gallon model) and provide complete, deep soaking of the roots.

The 14-gallon Irrigation Ring (\$24.95) is for trees and shrubs with branches at least 6 inches above the ground, and the 20-gallon one (\$29.95) is for branches at least 25 inches up. Both fit around trunks up to 4 feet in diameter. Visit Country Home products at www.drpower.com or call 800-687-6575.



HANDS-ON, HURT OFF

The Bionic Garden Gloves are designed with patented features to improve comfort without interfering with hand motion. The gloves provide extra padding for the thumb, fingers and palm, and they support the wrist with a form-fitting wrist closure system. The gloves are made of Cabretta leather, which is washable, and has web zones to enhance air flow and moisture control. The Bionic Garden Gloves are \$39.99 per pair and can be found at www.GardensAlive.com and 513-354-1482.



WAFERS OF INSTANT SOIL

Save your back and arms with a tube of Wonder Soil®, where one wafer can fill a 4-inch pot. Just add 1-1½ cups of water and watch the soil expand to 14 times its original volume to form a complete growing medium. With 18 wafers in the 1-pound tube, you can have approximately the amount of a 12-15 pound bag of regular potting soil. These lightweight wafers are made of coconut coir, Canadian peat, water saving polymers and nutrients. To purchase Wonder Soil® for \$9.99, visit www.wondersoil.com or www.gardengatestore.com



KEEP MOSQUITOES OUT

Do you want to provide fresh water for birds, but don't want the mosquitoes to lay their eggs in the standing water? Use the Water Wiggler to keep mosquitoes out and birds in.

Simply unscrew the white dome of the Water Wiggler, put in two D batteries, add the wire supports and set the Water Wiggler in the center of your shallow birdbath. This unique agitator creates continuous ripples in the water. These ripples prevent mosquitoes from laying eggs.

Water Wigglers, distributed by Allied Precision Industries, Inc., are available at Wild Birds Unlimited stores, various sites online and at www.duncraft.com or call 800-879-5095.



SMALL BUT POWERFUL

Need a little more power but hate hauling your huge tiller out? Use the Mantis Tiller/Cultivator and you get both the small size and a powerful force. It can till under old growth, prepare the soil for cultivation, weed between garden rows and more. The tiller also has optional attachments available including a crevice cleaner, planter/furrower and lawn de-thatcher. The Mantis Tiller costs \$299 and can be purchased at www.mantis.com or 800-366-6268.



NEED A LITTLE SUPPORT?

Use the Wig-wam Support to hold up canes for Runner Beans and Sweet Peas. Buy two for \$3.95 or four for \$6.90 at www.thompson-morgan.com or 800-274-7333. 

Compiled by Jennifer Nelson, Colorado Country Life, Denver, Colo.

HERBS

for aroma, for flavor, for romance

By June Santon, master gardener

Growing herbs is all about aroma and taste. It is even a little bit about sound, if you think about the buzzing of bees and the chirping of birds brought to your garden by fragrant herbs.

An herb is just a plant that we like to use for aroma and flavor in foods, or one that makes a substance that has medicinal value. If you'd like to set aside a special space for an herb garden, your best bet is to prepare it just the way you would prepare any other mixed garden. Find a spot that gets several hours of sun every day. Clear the space and dig in lots of compost. If you're planting seeds, cover them with a very thin layer of mulch and water with a fine spray at least once a day until they germinate. If you're planting young seedlings, use a thicker layer of mulch and water often enough to keep the soil slightly damp but not wet.

Try a design other than straight rows. Here's an idea: Surround a birdbath by four squares to form a larger square. Separate the four small squares with two straight graveled paths, forming a cross with the birdbath at the center, where they intersect. A cheerful row of bright orange marigolds could outline the paths, and pansies could outline the larger square.

Flowers like marigold blossoms, pansies and rose petals are edible and make beautiful garnishes. Rose hips are used as an herb tea. I love to sprinkle chive blossoms, pretty little puff-balls the color of amethysts, over a salad. Arugula makes delicate white blossoms with a slight peppery taste. Lavender blossoms have a sweet, perfumey essence and look pretty sprinkled over strawberry shortcake with whipped cream.

You'll choose your own favorite herbs for your garden, of course. Here are some of my favorites:



Chive blossoms are delightful sprinkled over a salad, or as a cheerful bouquet in a vase.

Pineapple sage: Lightly stroke your fingers over a leaf and you're rewarded with a rich, ripe scent exactly as if you'd just sliced open a ripe pineapple. It makes gorgeous, neon-red blossoms that hummingbirds find irresistible.

Loveage: Loveage stems and leaves taste exactly like celery, only stronger. I use celery flavor in all kinds of soups and stews, in rice—you name it. Because of its punch of flavor, I like to use loveage instead of celery.

Chives: Easy to grow, useful in zillions of dishes, with edible flowers pretty enough for a bouquet.

Garlic chives: Similar to chives but the flavor is a mild cross between onion and garlic. It's delicious and adds a note of color sprinkled raw over salads, potatoes and other foods.

Match Your Herbs to Your Soil

CLAY SOILS

Most plants have a hard time in clay soils, but some actually seem to do best in clay, and many others tolerate this

soil type quite well. German chamomile, cilantro and caraway do especially well in clay soils. Angelica, lemon Balm, most varieties of mint, bergamot, chives and garlic chives, fennel, English lavender and sage all tolerate clay soils.

In general, herbs that like a lot of moisture are most likely to take well to clay, because clay soils tend to become waterlogged after heavy rains or as the winter snow melts off.

SANDY SOILS

The majority of herbs do very well in sandy, fast-draining soils. Marjoram, oregano, summer savory and winter savory, rosemary, tarragon and thyme all thrive in sandy soil.

Bay trees, the trees that make bay leaves like you get in those little tin containers, prefer sandy soil. Make sure you get the species *Laurus nobilis*, often called sweet bay, or bay laurel, or culinary bay. Once you've experienced the heady aroma from a fresh-picked bay leaf, that little tin container will never seem the same.

HOT, MOIST CLIMATES

Tropical gardeners do face limits. Some herbs really don't like all that humidity and warmth. Floridians can grow lemon verbena that reaches its full potential, and its full height of 16 feet. But that may also be the only climate where mildew can become a problem for herbs such as summer savory, rosemary and basil. Some herbs, such as sorrel, do much better in cooler temperatures. English lavender doesn't flower well or thrive in high humidity, and scented geraniums are damaged by heavy rainfall. ☺

June Santon is a writer by trade and a gardener by avocation. She has gardened in a variety of locales, including San Diego, Houston, and her current home in Colorado.

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North Carolina's Preserve America Communities



NC Division of Tourism, Film and Sports Development, Bill Russ, Photographer

By Jennifer Taylor

he South's Prettiest Small Town," Edenton is nestled on the Albemarle Sound in Chowan County. Indians knew it as the "Town on the Matecomack Creek." Incorporated in 1715, the settlement was named the "Town on Queen Anne's Creek." When the colonial governor Charles Eden passed away in 1722, the town was renamed in his honor. The first permanent settlement in the state, Edenton was capital of the North Carolina colony from 1722 until 1743.

In those days, Edenton was a busy hub with hundreds of ships delivering foods and goods and exporting local agricultural crops to European harbors. Vast plantation settlements spread across the region surrounding the town.

In 1774, approximately 50 women in the town signed a pledge to stop using East India Tea, joining the same political movement that swept through Boston, Mass., in an effort to oppose British taxation. The action came to be known as the Edenton Tea Party. A colonial teapot is now mounted in Edenton atop a Revolutionary cannon marking the site of this event.

Steering clear of major damage during the Civil War, Edenton's historic district is best known for its surviving colonial homes that have been restored to preserve their beauty and history. The Barker House (shown above), built in 1782, was home to Thomas and Penelope Barker. Penelope played a significant role in the Edenton Tea Party. The Edenton Historical Commission now owns and maintains the property, offering tours to the public. The Cupola House, erected in 1758, is another colonial property that can be seen in Edenton's historic district. Considered one of the most noteworthy early dwellings in the state, the Cupola House is a National Historic Landmark.

Other points of interest include the James Iredell House, the Chowan County Courthouse and the St. Paul's

Episcopal Church. Over 25 homes and sites in the historic district have been recognized by the National Register for Historic Places. A trolley tour runs through the district and highlights Edenton's African-American heritage. Guided tours of the historic district are available. Visitors can also enjoy kayak expeditions in Edenton harbor or visit the National Fish Hatchery with walking trails and ponds. The waterfront is a picturesque setting that defines Edenton's gracefulness.

Devoted to preserving its historical heritage, Edenton was recently designated a Preserve America community. Albemarle EMC is the Touchstone Energy cooperative serving members in the area surrounding Edenton. 

The Preserve America Program

Established in 2003 by the Bush Administration, Preserve America is a White House initiative to promote and support community efforts that preserve our nation's heritage through the preservation of cultural and natural assets. Preserve America consists of a variety of components that include presenting Preserve America Presidential awards, identifying Preserve America communities, as well as establishing educational outreach programs and a matching grant program.

Since the implementation of the program, seven areas in North Carolina have been designated as Preserve America communities: Thomasville, Gaston County, Gastonia, Kinston, Edenton, Ocracoke, and Hatteras Village. There are 295 designated communities in the nation. The distinction is based on the area's use of historical assets for economic development and community revitalization.

For more information on Preserve America and the Preserve America communities, visit www.preserveamerica.gov or call (202) 606-8503. The remaining communities recognized in North Carolina will be featured in upcoming months of the magazine.

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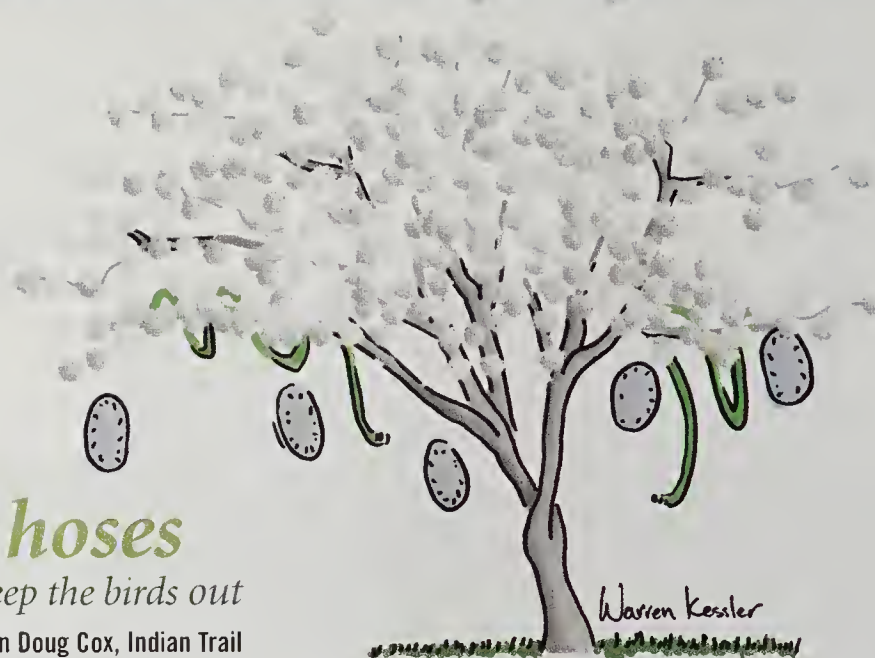
Carolina country if...

...your grandma put

pie plates & rubber hoses

in her cherry trees, in order to keep the birds out

From Doug Cox, Indian Trail



From Sally Kernstine, Lexington

- ... You picked out the prettiest cedar tree you could find each December, in your grandpa's back woods, to be your perfect Christmas tree.
- ... On Christmas morning, you pushed peppermint sticks into juicy oranges and sucked out the sweet juice.
- ... On Christmas morning you played pick-up sticks and jumping jacks on your grandmother's back porch steps in the warm sunshine.
- ... Your grandmother kept fresh eggs and bottles of ginger ale on her screened-in back porch to keep them cold.
- ... You needed to hurry home and were expected to "make tracks."

From Carolyn & Ron Oakley, Franklinton and Florida

- ... You made frog holes in a freshly plowed garden.
- ... You've gone to church on Sunday morning, brought home a friend for the day and took him back to church that night.
- ... Your mother stayed in the kitchen all the time, because that was the only room with a fan.
- ... You dug a few "frush" potatoes for supper and covered the roots back up.
- ... You DROVE the school bus so you wouldn't miss it (and made a dollar a day).

From Marcy Maley, Rocky Point

- ... You say, "God must be a Tar Heel else the sky wouldn't be Carolina blue."

From Lisa Carpenter, Bessemer City

- ... You know what your mother means when she tells you your new dress looks like two pigs fighting in a sack.
- ... You know you're in trouble when your mother tells you "I'll snatch you ball-headed."
- ... You really do fear daddy jerking a knot in your tail.
- ... You go grocery shopping for the first time alone and ask the produce manager why they don't sell "arsh taters."
- ... You eat dirt because the doctor says you need more iron in your blood.

From Tammy Reid, Salisbury

- ... The grocery store or gas station is better known as the beer store.
- ... You would rather push a Ford than drive a Chevy.
- ... Pinto beans and cornbread would be your last-meal request.
- ... Redneck is not just a word, it's a way of life.

From Carolyn Herr Watts, Raleigh

- ... The car washes remind patrons not to wash pig cookers in the bays.

From Francina L. Belton, Wayne County

- ... You ate pee weeds from the edge of the yard, and even though Grandma said the flavor came from dogs peeing on them, they sure tasted real good.
- ... Sweet potatoes and cracklins were a complete meal for you on hog-killing day as you watched Grandma stir the big, old cast iron pot and boil chittlings.
- ... You put out the wash basin and face bowl on top of the pump house so you could catch snow for snow cream.

From Delford Jones, formerly of Sampson County

- ... The wash pot was used on Friday and Saturday nights for the community fish fry.
- ... You went to the sawmill in late August to get in your supply of wood for the winter.
- ... Meal bread was cooked on top of the stove. (Meal bread by itself was not good eating, but add some clabber and collard greens and a piece of fatback, and it was heaven.)
- ... You tell someone that you're fixin' to slap a pump knot upside his head.
- ... You made your own kites out of dried dog fennels, twine, dry cleaning paper and your mom's stocking.

From Doug Cox, Indian Trail

- ... In order to keep the birds out of her cherry trees, your grandma put pie plates and rubber hoses in them. From a hook at her back door she would run a string to each tree for shaking the tree.
- ... Your grandma bakes a two-crusted white sweet potato pie in an earthen dish.
- ... You never got to eat the best of the peanut crop because your grandma would pick them out, dry them and put them in jars for next year's planting.
- ... Your grandma would cut, fold and sew waxed paper into rectangular tubes which she put around her new tomato plants in the spring to keep the unexpected frost from biting.
- ... Your first portable televisions measured about 3-by-3-by-3 feet and you got one station on it.
- ... Your dentist's drilling instrument was powered by an elaborate set of strings and pulleys.

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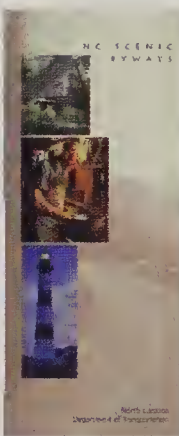
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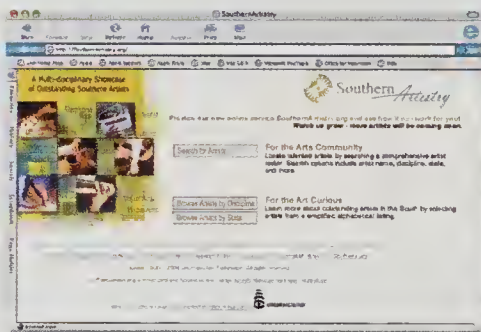
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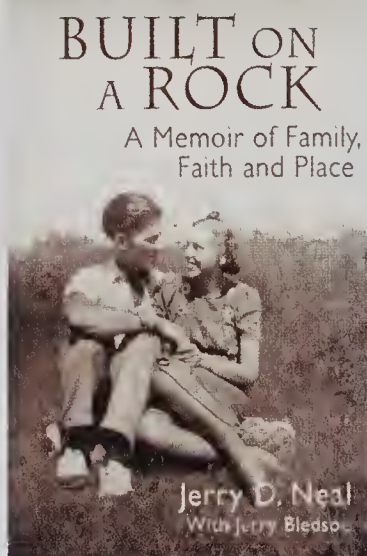
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on the bookshelf

A memoir of family & faith

Set in Randolph County, where author Jerry Neal grew up, "Built on a Rock: A Memoir of Family, Faith and Place" is a personal story of values, hard work and conviction. After helping found a successful electronics company, Neal and his wife Linda worked to serve children through St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis and Victory Junction Gang Camp for ill children near Randleman. They spent six years building Linbrook Hall, a center for charitable works. "Built on a Rock" covers the above events, as well as Neal's recollections of growing up in his close-knit family in the Uwharrie Mountains. Published by Down Home Press in Asheboro and distributed by John F. Blair Publisher of Winston Salem. Hardcover, 239 pages, \$24.95.

(800) 222-9796
www.blairpub.com



BUILT ON A ROCK

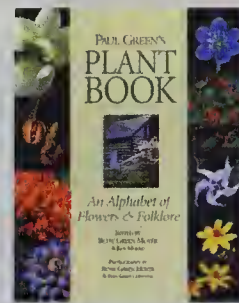
A Memoir of Family, Faith and Place

Jerry D. Neal
With Jerry Bledsoe

"Paul Green's Plant Book"

This compilation of famed professor, playwright and author Paul Green's writings celebrates his deep love for folklore and nature and includes old-time herbal lore, regional tales and personal reminiscences. Green's daughter, Betsy Green Moyer, collaborated with botanist Ken Moore to put together poetic plant descriptions and other botanical notes coupled with sharply detailed, color nature photographs from numerous field trips through Cape Fear Valley. Photography by Moyer and Byrd Green Cornwell. "Paul Green's Plant Book: An Alphabet of Flowers & Folklore" is published by Botanical Garden Foundation, Inc. in Chapel Hill. Hardcover, \$28.95, 124 pages.

(919) 962-0522
www.ncbg.unc.edu

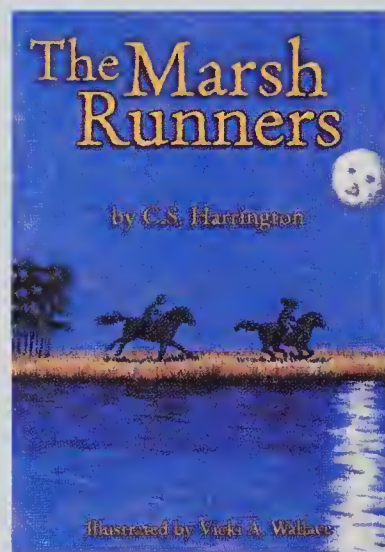
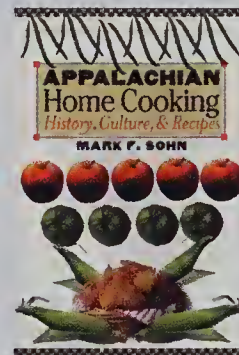


Appalachian recipes and more

Biscuits and gravy, chicken dumplings, cornbread and green beans—these foods and many other tasty dishes are at the heart of Appalachian cooking.

"Appalachian Home Cooking: History, Culture and Recipes" examines the staple foods and ingredients of this distinct culinary heritage, outlining food preparation procedures and comparing and contrasting recipes and methods found outside the region. Author and food historian Mark F. Sohn also explores the role that the foods play in cultural activities such as school lunches and church picnics, and provides a glossary, specific meal plans, a listing of mail-order sources and more than 80 recipes. Published by University Press of Kentucky in Lexington. Softcover, \$26, 384 pages.

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www.kentuckypress.com



Pre-teens on Outer Banks adventures

Twelve-year-old Charlie Davis and 11-year-old Cora Daniels love living on the edge—the edge of the Graveyard of the Atlantic, that is. Along with their kooky canine companions, Jack and Jill, they have an action-packed, strange, stormy summer on the Outer Banks. One of an adventure series, "The Marsh Runners" is based on

historical facts and legends and is a tale of treacherous weather, suspense and rescues on land and sea. "Marsh Runners II: Uncharted Waters" follows the preteens on more adventures. Author C.S. Harrington is an eighth-generation Outer Banks native who lives on Roanoke Island. Illustrated by former Roanoke Island resident Vicki Wallace. "The Marsh Runners" is published by Maritime Kids Quest Press in Manteo. Softcover, 114 pages, \$14.95.

(252) 473-6933
www.marshrunners.com

State Fair history

Capturing the state's biggest event and largest agricultural fair in the nation, the N.C. State Fair celebrated its 150th anniversary in 2003. "The N.C. State Fair Book: The First 150 Years" features people, politics and events that have shaped the annual fall event. The history of the fair is shown in more than 300 pictures depicting images from its early agricultural roots to its social and educational importance in the 21st century. Written by Melton A. McLaurin and published by N.C. Historical Publications in Raleigh. Hardcover, \$20, 236 pages.

(919) 733-7442
<http://store.yahoo.com/nc-historical-publications/nocastfafi15.html>





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Photo by Michael Muzzio

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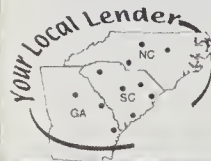
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\$150,000	\$816.73	30 YR. Fixed	5.12*	5.32%
\$200,000	\$770.83	5 YR ARM	4.62***	5.34%
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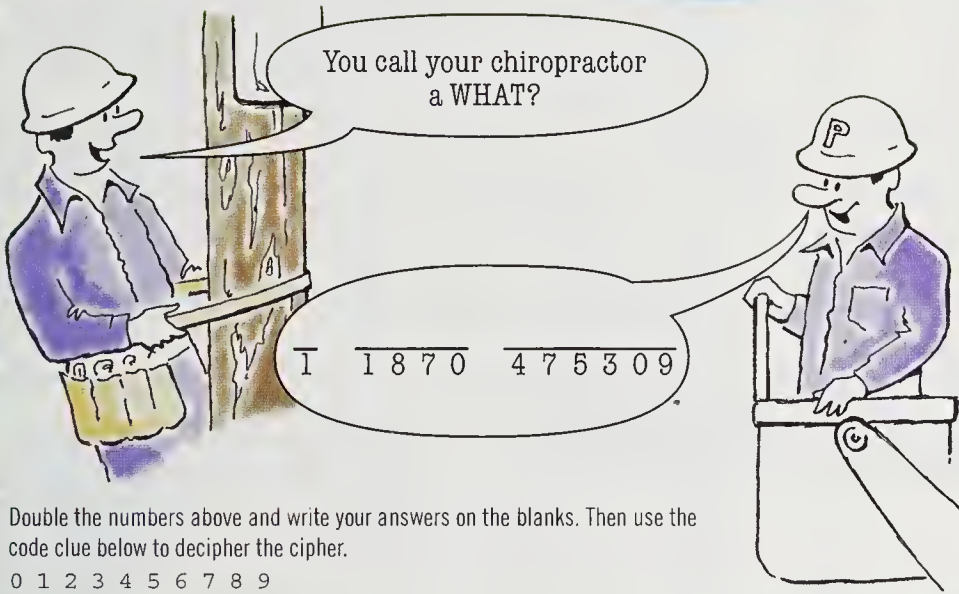
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PERCY P. CASSIDY POLES APART



State buys land with endangered flower

—headline on an AP story out of Asheboro
money doesn't grow on trees, but...

$\pi^5_2c^p$ a **MATH** WIRDZ

Letters have been substituted for digits in this division problem. Can you replace the digits to find the value of March? Repeated letters stand for repeated digits.

M A R C H

H | A C H M R
H

B C

T O

T H

T H

M

C

M R

M R

UNSCRAMBLIT

b y b i n u c i i z z s b u v n c q b e s u z q c h b
k c w k y d u b y c v x y b s z t b u .

Each letter in this cryptogram stands for a different letter. Use the capital letters in the code clue below to help fill in the blanks above.
"UNSCRAMBLE THIS ONE" is
"paeiuvfxyb nkce zab

LIGHT VERSE

When Adam was created Man, he didn't have a wife.
So God said he would fix that with his little carving knife.
"Good Lord, I'm not complaining," Adam said—"Don't be so glib!
"I love it here; the peace and quiet—God, can't you take a rib?"

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March Events



Reconnect with the natural world at the annual WNC Orchid Society Juried Show and Sale at the North Carolina Arboretum in Asheville, March 25–26. Call (828) 665-2492 or go to www.ncarboretum.org for more information.

MOUNTAINS

"Moscow Nights"

March 5, Brasstown
(828) 835-9465
www.mapaa.org

"Artists in Wood"

March 18–19, Asheville
(828) 665-2492
www.ncarboretum.org

Bill Kennedy, Irish author

March 24, Morganton
(828) 438-1666

Gem & Mineral Show

March 24–26, Morganton
(828) 438-5350

Catawba Valley Pottery

& Antiques Festival
March 25, Hickory
(828) 322-3943

Orchid Show

March 25–26, Asheville
(828) 665-2492
www.ncarboretum.org

"Sylvia"

March 31–April 2, Hayesville
(877) 691-9906
www.licklogplayers.org

PIEDMONT

Edwin McCain, bluegrass

March 2, Oakboro
(704) 485-3649
www.oakboromusichall.com

Craig Karges

Mystery, Humor & Intuition
March 4, Winston-Salem
(336) 723-6320
www.ncarts.edu/stevens_center

36 Degrees North, bluegrass

March 4, Pilot Mountain
(336) 368-7111
www.sawbriar.com

"Mid-Winter Music Festival"

March 4, Mineral Springs
(803) 329-3833

Confederacy Pictorial

March 5, Indian Trail
(704) 283-8184
www.union.lib.nc.us

Itty Bitty Books

March 7, Charlotte
(704) 337-2000
www.mintmuseum.org

Artists' Forum

March 7, Charlotte
(704) 337-2000
www.mintmuseum.org

"Dance of Desire"

March 9, Winston-Salem
(336) 723-6320
www.ncarts.edu/stevens_center

Mountain Heart, bluegrass

March 10, Oakboro
(704) 485-3649
www.oakboromusichall.com

"Our Sinatra"

March 11, Yanceyville
(336) 694-4591

Old-Time Fiddlers' Convention

March 11, High Falls
(910) 464-3600
<http://schoolcenter.mcs.k12.nc.us/hf>

"Sones De Mexico"

Mexican folk music
March 11, Winston-Salem
(336) 723-6320
www.ncarts.edu/stevens_center

St. Patrick's Day Show

March 17, Pilot Mountain
(336) 368-7111
www.sawbriar.com

Renewed for Women

March 18, Lexington
(336) 224-0992
www.renewedforwomen.com

Super Science Saturday

March 18, Fayetteville
(910) 829-9171
www.fascinate-u.com

Kovack Pottery Festival

March 18–20, Seagrove
(336) 873-8727

Family Day

March 19, Charlotte
(704) 337-2000
www.mintmuseum.org

"Lunch at the Piccadilly"

March 19, Fayetteville
(910) 323-4233
www.cfrt.org

Battle of Averbosboro

March 19, Fayetteville
(910) 891-5019
www.averasboro.com

Fayetteville Symphony Orchestra

March 19, Fayetteville
(910) 433-4690
www.fayettevillesymphony.org

Divine Maggees, acoustic

March 24, Pilot Mountain
(336) 368-7111
www.sawbriar.com

N.C. Barbecue Championship

March 24–25, Rockingham
(910) 582-3400
www.smokeattherock.com

New Found Road, bluegrass/gospel

March 25, Oakboro
(704) 485-3649
www.oakboromusichall.com

Magic Dressage Horse Show

March 25–26, Williamston
(252) 792-5111
www.sportingservices.net

Collegiate Art History Symposium

March 26, Charlotte
(704) 337-2000
www.mintmuseum.org

Easter in Early Carolina

March 26, Gastonia
(704) 866-6900
www.schielemuseum.org

COAST

Spring Horse Show

March 4–5, Williamston
(252) 792-5111
www.nceha.com

"The Black Watch"

March 9, Greenville
(800) 328-2787
www.ecuarts.com

Ransom,

Whitehouse & McKenzie
March 11, Morehead City
(252) 728-4488
www.americanmusicfestival.org

Annual St. Patrick's Festival

March 17–18, Emerald Isle
(252) 354-6350
www.emeraldisle-nc.org

Arabian Horse Show

March 17–19, Williamston
(252) 792-5111

David DiGiuseppe &

Pete Campbell, folk music
March 18, Morehead City
(252) 504-2787

Daffodil Festival

March 25, Fremont
(919) 242-5724

Robert Shields'

One Man Show
March 25, Edenton
(252) 482-8005

March Events *continued*

Newport Pig Cookin' Contest

March 31–April 2, Newport
(252) 223-7447
www.newportpigcooking.com

Herb & Garden Fair

April 1, Wilmington
(910) 686-9518
www.poplargrove.com

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MOUNTAINS

Carl Moser Photography

Through March 12, Hickory
Hickory Museum of Art
(828) 327-8576
www.hickorymuseumofart.org

"Kickin' It"

Through March 19, Asheville
Asheville Art Museum
(828) 253-3227
www.ashevilleart.org

"Who? What? Where? When?"

Through April, Lenoir
Caldwell Heritage Museum
(828) 758-4004
www.caldwellheritagemuseum.org

"Needlework & Quilts"

Through April 1,
Kings Mountain,
Kings Mountain Historical
Museum
(704) 739-1019

Tom Mate, artist

Through April 9, Hickory
Hickory Museum of Art
(828) 327-8576
www.hickorymuseumofart.org

Southern

Decorative Arts Exhibit

Through April 22,
Kings Mountain
Kings Mountain Historical
Museum
(704) 739-1019

"Our Earth & Beyond"

Through April 23, Hickory
Hickory Museum of Art
(828) 327-8576
www.hickorymuseumofart.org

PIEDMONT

"Uncommon Threads"

Through March 12,
Fayetteville
Fayetteville Museum of Art
(910) 485-5121
www.fay-moa.org

"The Potter's Eye"

Through March 19, Raleigh
N.C. Museum of Art
(919) 839-6262
<http://ncartmuseum.org>

"Family Legacies"

Through March 26,
Chapel Hill
Ackland Art Museum
(919) 966-5736
www.ackland.org

"A Natural View"

March 9–April 23, Gastonia
Schiele Museum
(704) 866-6900
www.schielemuseum.org

"Moving Pictures"

March 10–July 16,
Winston-Salem
Reynolda House Museum
(888) 663-1149
www.reynoldahouse.org

CAROLINA COUNTRY adventures



Art by Jane Peiser

This scenic area is home to Mount Mitchell, the highest peak east of the Mississippi. Getting to either county generally means driving up, up, up on winding mountain roads that reveal intriguing hollows and fertile valleys. Making and selling quality art is replacing fading industries of logging and tobacco farming here, and folks say there are more craftspeople per capita in this area than any other in the U.S. Both counties hold a rich trove of gems and minerals, with Mitchell claiming the renowned Penland School of Crafts. Interesting shops in downtown Spruce Pine include Rocks & Things and Gladys's Books & Antiques. Locals suggest sipping java at Dixie Donuts or munching eclectic fare at Foxfire Café. In Burnsville, visitors can easily walk to a unique cluster of art galleries, shops and restaurants bordering the town square. Check out Something Special Gift Shop, with home furnishings and old-fashioned children's toys, and The Design Gallery, with fine arts and crafts. Locals like to convene at the Hilltop Restaurant and Garden Deli.

Three top spots:

TRAC art galleries: Headquartered in Spruce Pine, the Toe River Arts Council (TRAC) recently opened a second gallery in Burnsville. Both galleries feature rotating exhibitions. TRAC also offers free, self-guided studio tours in June and December. More than 100 artisans participate. Call (828) 765-0520 (Spruce Pine), (828) 682-7215 (Burnsville), or visit www.toeriverarts.org

Mount Mitchell State Park: At 6,684 feet, the summit offers spectacular views—on a clear day it's possible to see 70 miles away. About 33 miles north from Asheville, the 1,855-acre park offers camping, trails, a natural history museum and restaurant. Call (828) 675-4611 or visit www.ils.unc.edu/parkproject/visit/momi/home.html

Young's Mountain Music: On Highway 19E at the Yancey-Mitchell county line, Young's hosts live bands Saturday nights. Its non-alcoholic facility seats 300 and boasts a large dance floor. Call (828) 675-4365.

Learn of other nearby adventures and events:

Yancey County/Burnsville Chamber of Commerce
(800) 948-1632
www.yanceychamber.com

Mitchell County Chamber of Commerce
(800) 227-3912
www.Mitchell-county.com

Yancey/Mitchell Counties (French Broad EMC territory)





Competition of N.C. Artists

March 19–May 7, Fayetteville
Fayetteville Museum of Art
(910) 485-5121
www.fay-moa.org

Art of Margie Graves

March 24–April 27, Fayetteville
Cape Fear Studios
(910) 433-2986

“Cheaper by the Dozen”

March 31–April 9, Mocksville
Davie County
Community Theatre
(336) 751-3000
www.daviearts.org

“Thirties Glamour & Allure of Bakelite”

Through April 2, Charlotte
Mint Museum of Art
(704) 337-2000
www.mintmuseum.org

“Brain: The World Inside Your Head”

Through May 7, Raleigh
N.C. Museum
of Natural Sciences
(919) 733-7450
www.naturalsciences.org

“Secret Games”

Through May 7, Charlotte
Mint Museum of Art
(704) 337-2000
www.mintmuseum.org

“American Roots”

Through May 19, Carrboro
The ArtsCenter
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Deadlines:

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Bare-Root Plants

Many trees and perennials are sold this time of year as bare-root plants. Bare-root plants can fool the eye because they may appear dead, but they are merely dormant, with the soil removed from the roots.

Buying bare-root plants has many advantages. They are substantially cheaper than potted plants, the selection is much greater, they are easier to handle and plant, and they establish readily. Fruit trees, roses, asparagus, raspberries and strawberries are commonly offered as bare-root plants. Mail-order nurseries usually schedule shipment so that the plant will arrive at the proper planting time for your region.

Check the plants upon arrival. The roots should be moist and plump. They should smell earthy, with no mold, mildew or slime. (With bare-root roses, also inspect for green canes.) Before planting, soak the roots in water for several hours to hydrate them. Dig the planting hole in advance, allowing enough room to accommodate the width and depth of the roots. Do not amend the planting soil with fertilizer to avoid damaging the roots. Plant them as soon as possible, keeping them wrapped in wet newspaper or paper towels until then. If you can't plant within a few days, dig



a small trench in the ground, lay the plant horizontally in the trench and cover the roots with soil.

If you get bare-root plants from a nursery or home improvement store, buy them as soon as the shipments arrive in late winter or early spring. Avoid plants that already have leaves.

Eat Your Weeds

You've probably heard that some weeds are edible—even the oft-despised dandelion. The young foliage can be eaten in salads or cooked. If you hand-pull dandelions, you'll effectively remove these perennial weeds and have a meal to spare. (Don't harvest from areas treated with chemicals.) Use a flathead screwdriver or specialized garden tool to extract the entire taproot. Then remove the green tops. Dandelion greens should be harvested when the leaves are young and tender, before flowering. Add leaves to salads or cook them by steaming or boiling. To remove any bitterness, soak them in cold water for several hours before cooking or change the cooking water once. Other weeds suitable for the table include watercress (often called creasy greens), purslane and lamb's quarters.

Plant Trees for Arbor Day

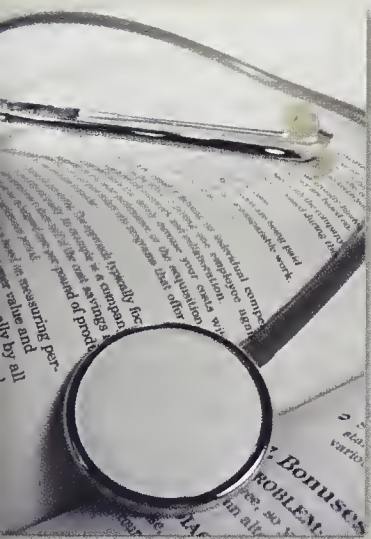
National Arbor Day is the last Friday in April each year, but individual state observances vary according to the best tree-planting times. North Carolina's Arbor Day is the first Friday after March 15. Arbor Day began in Nebraska in 1872 at the suggestion of newspaper journalist J. Sterling Morton. Morton not only advocated tree planting by individuals, but he also encouraged civic organizations and groups to join in. To commemorate Arbor Day, you can plant a tree on your own or host an event in your community that includes tree-planting. The city of Statesville hosts a noteworthy celebration on March 18 that includes a children's festival with storytelling, activities and free trees. For more information, visit www.statesvilletrees.org. With a \$10 membership, the National Arbor Day Foundation will send you 10 trees (6- to 12-inches tall) of varying species suitable for your region. They also sell tree seedlings in attractive gift containers for weddings or other special events. For more information, call 1-888-448-7337 or visit www.arborday.org 

Hort Shorts

- ▶ Plant seeds of beets, carrots, lettuce, radishes, onions, chard, kale, spinach and turnips this month.
- ▶ If you lack enough light or space indoors to start seeds, try winter sowing. Sow seeds in milk jugs or other food containers outdoors in a sheltered location, cover and keep watered. Select plants whose seedlings are cold-hardy, such as the kind that volunteer in your garden.
- ▶ Use newspaper (4- to 6-sheets thick) to suppress tough weeds in beds. Top with mulch.
- ▶ Do not prune or remove leaves of daffodils or other bulbs until they are brown or withered. The leaves produce food that is stored in the bulbs, essential for next year's flowers.



Carla Burgess can be reached at ncgardenshare@mindspring.com. For more gardening advice, go to the "Carolina Gardens" section of www.carolinacountry.com



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Before you buy your next heating system ...

With changing home energy prices, it can be somewhat confusing to determine which type of heating system—electric, oil, propane, gas, alternative—is the best to install in a new room addition or for an entire building. The relative prices of the fuels vary from region to region, so take the time to do some local cost research. For example, I made several calls this week and I found a 20-percent variation in propane prices among companies in my area alone.

There are several criteria to consider when selecting a system. Obviously, the size of your monthly utility bill is a primary one for most homeowners. The initial cost of installing the system is another. Also, consider the lifetime maintenance costs and the impact that each fuel type will have on the environment and your children's long-term health and well-being.

Making some minor lifestyle changes, such as lowering the temperature in unused rooms, can impact your utility bills and your system selection. For example, even though baseboard electric resistance heating is one of the most expensive to operate, it could be more economic to install it in a new room addition if it is not often used. It is inexpensive to install and it allows you to switch it completely off and save overall without impacting your central heating system.

Calculating the relative cost of fuels is simple. First, calculate the cost of one Btu (British thermal unit) of heat from each fuel type. This is done by dividing your local utility rate or price per gallon, cord, bushel, etc., by the Btu heat content in that amount of fuel. Next, divide this result by the efficiency of the heating appliance you are using to determine the amount you are paying for each Btu that actually ends up heating your home.

The following are typical heat contents for common fuels to use in your calculations: natural gas = 1,025 Btu/cubic foot; oil = 138,700 Btu/gallon; propane = 91,000 Btu/gallon; electricity = 3,414 Btu/kilowatt-hour; firewood = 22 million Btu/cord; and shelled corn = 448,000 Btu/bushel. The actual heat content of firewood can vary significantly depending upon the type and how well it is seasoned (its moisture content).

Unless you are a farmer who grows corn or has a free source of firewood, you will generally find geothermal electric heat pumps to be the least expensive to operate. This is because they tap into the natural heat in the ground. Summertime air-conditioning costs will also be the lowest with geothermal heat pumps. Their drawback is a significantly higher installation cost.

Also heat pumps, whether air-to-air or geothermal, have motors, compressors and other moving parts, so you should factor in typical maintenance costs. In most climates, standard air-to-air heat pumps will also fair well in your heating



Geothermal electric heat pumps tap into the natural heat in the ground, making them one of the least expensive systems to operate.

cost comparison. Electric rates, although they increase with time, like most products, are less volatile than fossil fuels (gas, oil, propane). The efficiency of a heat pump varies with the outdoor temperature, so in severely cold weather, your electric resistance furnace will come on to keep your house warm.

Hybrid heat pump systems are becoming more popular. With these systems, you install a regular gas, propane, oil, wood or corn furnace with a heat pump instead of just a central air conditioner. Installing a heat pump will cost several hundred dollars more than a similar central air conditioner. I have an all-electric house, so I use a heat pump with corn and firewood backup heat for very cold weather.

Other than during very cold weather, a heat pump can be less expensive to operate than a fossil-fuel furnace. As the outdoor temperature drops and the heat pump becomes less efficient, the gas, propane or oil furnace takes over. Your heating contractor should be able to adjust the changeover temperature from heat pump to furnace based upon the relative local cost of gas/oil and electricity.

Alternative fuels, such as corn, wheat, wood pellets, cherry pits, etc., are an option to consider for a furnace or just a freestanding heater, such as the one I use. Fifty-pound bags of corn are available at most farm supply and pet stores. I buy 40-pound bags of wood pellets at any home center, feed supply or wood stove store, but they are often in short supply.

If you plan to use some of these homegrown or recycled fuels for backup heat, consider getting a system that can be adjusted to burn different types of fuels. For example, one that is specifically designed to burn wood pellets will not be able to handle the higher ash content of corn.

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Deadline: 25th of the month,
5 weeks before issue date.



Ham and Swiss Chicken

- 2 eggs
- 2 cups milk, divided
- ½ cup butter, melted
- ½ cup chopped celery
- 1 teaspoon finely chopped onion
- 8 slices bread, cubed
- 12 thin slices deli ham, rolled up
- 2 cups (8 ounces) shredded Swiss cheese
- 2½ cups cubed cooked chicken
- 1 can (10¾ ounces) condensed cream of chicken soup, undiluted

and onion. Stir in bread cubes. Place half of the mixture in a greased slow cooker; top with half of the rolled-up ham, cheese and chicken.

Combine soup and remaining milk; pour half over the chicken. Repeat layers once.

Cover and cook on low 4–5 hours or until a thermometer inserted into bread mixture reads 160 degrees.

Yield: 6 servings



Chocolate Cobbler

- 1 cup self-rising flour
- ½ cup sugar
- 2 tablespoons plus ¼ cup baking cocoa, divided
- ½ cup milk
- 3 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 cup packed brown sugar
- 1¾ cups hot water
- Vanilla ice cream, optional

In a bowl, combine the flour, sugar and 2 tablespoons cocoa. Stir in milk and oil until smooth. Pour into a greased 8-inch square baking pan. Combine the brown sugar and remaining cocoa; sprinkle over batter. Pour hot water over top (do not stir). Bake at 350 degrees for 40–45 minutes or until top of cake springs back when lightly touched. Serve warm with ice cream if desired.

Yield: 6–8 servings

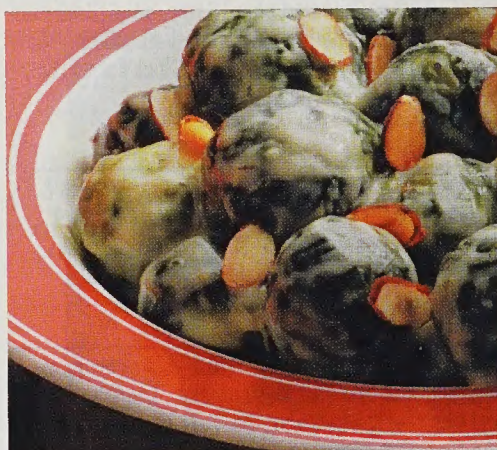


Noodle Rice Pilaf

- ¼ cup butter
- 1 cup long grain rice
- ½ cup uncooked fine egg noodles or vermicelli
- 2¾ cups chicken broth
- 2 tablespoons minced fresh parsley

In a saucepan, melt butter. Add the rice and noodles; cook and stir until lightly browned, about 3 minutes. Stir in broth; bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and simmer for 20–25 minutes or until broth is absorbed and rice is tender. Stir in parsley.

Yield: 4 servings



Savory Sprouts

- 1 package (16 ounces) frozen brussels sprouts
- 1 can (10¾ ounces) condensed cream of chicken soup, undiluted
- 3 tablespoons milk
- ¼ teaspoon dried thyme
- ¼ cup sliced almonds, toasted

Cut an X in the core of each sprout. In a pan, cook the sprouts according to package directions; drain. Remove and set aside.

To the pan, add soup, milk and thyme; heat through. Return sprouts to pan; stir to coat. Move to a dish; sprinkle with almonds.

Yield: 4–6 servings

Send Us Your Recipes

Carolina Country will begin publishing recipes from readers in future issues. Contributors whose recipes are published will receive \$25. We retain reprint rights for all submissions. Please make sure you don't omit any ingredients or preparation directions. Include your name, address, phone number (if we have questions), and the name of your electric cooperative.

By e-mail:
Jenny.Lloyd@carolinacountry.com

By mail: Carolina Country Kitchen,
P.O. Box 27306, Raleigh, NC 27611.

Recipes are by Taste of Home magazine. For a sample copy, send \$2 to Taste of Home, Suite 4321, PO Box 990, Greendale WI 53129-0990. Visit the Web page at www.tasteofhome.com



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